

Strategic Planning: What's the Value of Time Together?



Management teams who regularly invest time together to plan the future tend to be far more successful in running profitable and growing companies. Setting uninterrupted time aside to take your whole executive team out of the day-to-day operations to an off-site for two to three days may seem like a hefty investment. However, when leaders get away from day-to-day pressures, they gain a new perspective on their business and the issues that have bogged them down. In a retreat setting, there is time to dig into topics more deeply. A rich dialog allows teams to work through different and sometimes opposing positions, so that understanding increases and ultimately the best decisions can be made.

The Value of Time Together

Here are seven reasons why the investment of time together is so valuable and fruitful.

Refreshment – When a team gets away from the daily grind of tactics, pressures and interruptions, it's like a breath of fresh air. Conversations are richer and interactions tend to flow in new ways. (Proverbs 20:5 – The purpose of man's heart are deep waters, but a man of understanding draws them out.)

Perspective – It is only by getting away that you can truly see what's been going on. By stepping back and scanning the numbers, the economic trends, the accomplishments and the breakdowns, an objective view emerges like an outside observer would see it from 50,000 feet.

Course Correction – A relaxed state of mind, along with time to reflect as a team, makes it obvious what's working and not working. When all eyes are seeing the same information and team members have the time to share ideas for improvement, consensus can quickly be built for decisions and new directions. (Proverbs 27:6 Wounds from a friend can be trusted.)

Imagination – Experts will tell you that creativity is stimulated by such things as brainstorming conversations, critical thinking exercises, color, new surroundings, physical movement and materials for drawing. Many of these elements are naturally a part of a strategic off-site and do contribute to “out of the box” thinking.

Learning – Experts say real learning takes place when there is a slight level of stress but not overwhelming pressure. Being away from the daily pressure of multi-interruptions, meetings and emails creates focus and the ability to really think. Learning is heightened in a small group environment with such discussions as, “what lessons did we learn from this?”

Alignment – When people are away together they interact differently with one another. Social conversations take place more easily which leads to understanding and relationship building. Time spent together at mealtime and breaks from the conference room can add depth and meaning when it comes time for making critical decisions together.

Focus – In a well-planned and well-facilitated annual conference, leaders come away with strategies that give both a context (we are doing this because this is where we are going) and a tactical focus (we know what each of us is doing Monday – who’s accountable for each initiative)

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