

Creating Your Winning Hand

At a recent family reunion several of us continued a long standing tradition of playing cards. Gin rummy is one of the games that we play.

In this game each player is initially dealt a number of cards. The goal in playing the game is to create a winning hand of combinations of like cards. If you are able to do this before anyone else you win the game.

After the cards are dealt, each of us groups together what we believe are the winners and losers in our individual hands. We then hope to draw new cards to improve our hand, while discarding undesirable ones, until we win the game.



It is important to have a good strategy at the beginning. Sometimes it is not clear which cards are winners and losers. Each player's ability to formulate a plan, and then be prepared to adapt that plan as the game progresses, is often a key to success.

And as in life, luck can play an important role in the outcome.

Our traditional family reunion card game offers interesting insights into building and sustaining a successful business.

The Hand You Are Dealt

Every business manager is charged with playing the hand which he or she is initially dealt.

But it doesn't necessarily limit or restrict how you play the game.

It does, however, suggest that you proactively determine the likely winners and losers in your hand, develop a strategy for success, and then take appropriate actions to improve your hand over time.

Here are some examples of challenging business "cards" or situations which you may currently hold in your existing hand.

- Shifting consumer buying behaviors from your existing channels to new channels such as the Internet.
- Increasing costs to manufacture your products or create and deliver your services.
- New and/or tougher competition.
- Excess or inefficient capacity.

- Employees who are not sufficiently growing their skills or performing at needed levels.
- A product line that is tired and not offering consumer appealing innovation.
- Inadequate information systems to provide sufficient support to the business.

Do you hold any of these "cards" today?

We often observe managers devoting all of their time and energy to playing their existing hand as best they can. Making compromises, trying to compensate for weaknesses, redoubling efforts.....rather than realistically assessing their hand, determining how they may want to change it, and then moving forward with a plan to make it happen.

Moving to A Winning Hand

The essence of effective Strategic Planning is achieving and maintaining an ongoing winning hand.

We believe the most effective Strategic Plan is simple, clear and straightforward.

It answers three Key Questions:

1. Where Are We Today?
2. Where Do We Want To Go?
3. How Are We Going To Get There?

Where Are We Today?

The critical first step is objectively and candidly evaluating the "cards" in your current hand. Which ones are potential winners, and which ones are likely losers. This can be challenging because of our built in biases and preconceptions. We all have them.

These "blind spots" may lead us to overlook or avoid recognizing market realities and the company's real strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. Creating a Shared Knowledge Base™ of information that reflects reality is a start. Then honestly and openly discussing this as a management team can bring everybody together on the same page at the beginning.

Because if everyone starts together at the same place it will significantly improve the quality of the decision of where you want to go, and how you are going to get there.

Where Do We Want To Go?

The process of developing attractive growth options can be exhilarating and energizing. We recommend initially creating many different potentially attractive options.

Some of the "cards" in your hand may already be winners and offer significant growth opportunity. These may include appealing new products, technologies, distribution strength, brand recognition, supply chain efficiencies, and most importantly a capable and responsive employee team.

Some of the "cards" may be candidates for the discard pile. These may be products, markets, channels or even operations which don't appear to fit with your other "cards", or have limited potential, lack of sufficient mass, or face daunting competitive market pressures.

And some of the "cards" which you hold may challenge you to improve your management team's skills in playing them to create a winning hand.

Identifying the best alternatives from among the options you create can lead to a better shared understanding of trade offs, risks, and potential rewards which each represents.

It can also develop management buy in to fully support the direction ultimately selected.

How Are We Going To Get There?

The winning "cards" in your hand may be further strengthened through additional investment and focus. Appropriate acquisitions, licensing arrangements, and geographic or channel expansion are examples of potential enhancements to these winning "cards" that you may already hold.

The losing "cards" may be candidates for outsourcing or divestiture.

There may be some "cards" you hold which are vital to your success, but do not currently represent a strength. And they may not be suitable for outsourcing. These are the "cards" which require skillful playing, as you look for opportunities to draw new "cards" to help build these current challenging "cards" into a stronger overall hand.

Summary

Every manager is challenged with playing the "cards" each is dealt.

The opportunity is to proactively determine the likely winners and losers in your hand, develop a strategy for success, and then take appropriate actions to improve your hand over time.

The essence of effective Strategic Planning is achieving and maintaining an ongoing winning hand.

We believe the most effective Strategic Plan is simple, clear and straightforward.

It answers three Key Questions:

1. Where Are We Today?
2. Where Do We Want To Go?
3. How Are We Going To Get There?

Playing all of your "cards" well as you move toward your strategic winning hand is the challenge and reward in the marketplace.

We look forward to the opportunity to share with you how our team based Strategic Planning process, Marketing, and Merger and Acquisition services may support your company in building and maintaining your winning hand.



"Managers are the basic and scarcest resource of any business enterprise."

Peter Drucker

"Courage is sustained...by calling up anew the vision of the goal."

A. G. Sertillanges

"Progress is like a wheelbarrow; nothing happens unless somebody pushes."

Chinese Fortune Cookie

"There is no security on this earth.....only opportunity."

Douglas MacArthur

THE STOKELY PARTNERSHIP INC.

BUSINESS
GROWTH
SPECIALISTS

We improve our client's performance and profits through team based strategic plans, mergers and acquisitions and marketing.

