

Teambuilding: An Essential Part of the Strategic Planning Process

During my recent work with organizations, helping them develop strategic plans or facilitating their annual board retreats, I've noticed an area of clients' concern - working together as a team - that can impact the strategic planning process. While they don't come right out and say, "We need to work on teambuilding", I often hear the following comments from clients:

- "Some of my team members don't really get along, so I don't think they're really excited about the planning process."
- "Several of my senior team members are new; I hope they'll feel comfortable contributing."
- "We really are a group with strong personalities and opinions. I'm wondering if people will be able to consider different perspectives."

I've found that incorporating teambuilding upfront into organizations' strategic planning processes is an investment that will result in more collaborative, rewarding, and productive group dynamics.

If you decide to incorporate teambuilding into your planning processes, I recommend the following steps:

- Get participants to buy into the teambuilding approach upfront.
- Dedicate adequate time in your agenda to teambuilding.
- Determine the assessment tool that's right for you.
- Ask participants to complete individual assessments in advance and share the results.
- Create a safe space in the meeting to discuss individual styles and group dynamics.
- Find opportunities throughout the planning process to refer to what you've learned about your team and how it's informing the work.
- Close the planning process with a recap of what you've learned about the team.

In my work with clients, some informative assessments that I have found to be effective, inexpensive, and easy to administer include the following:

- **The StandOut Assessment** (<http://standout.tmbc.com/gui/>): This assessment tool identifies each individual's strengths and facilitates a team-oriented focus within the organization by identifying the greatest value each individual brings to the team. Also, by combining individual team reports, organizations can understand the collective strength of their team.

- **The Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument**
(<https://www.cpp.com/products/tki/index.aspx>): Although this tool primarily assesses how a person behaves when confronted with conflict (if he/she accommodates, compromises, competes, etc.), when individual styles are reviewed collectively, teams learn a lot about each other and how they can work together effectively.

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