

Large-Sale Strategic Planning in Times of Uncertainty

Dr. Mitchell Kusy

The Way We Typically Do Strategic Planning Must Change

Based on the world's present economic, political, and social environment, strategic planning as we have done it in the recent past must change. Why? Because the near-term future is ripe with obstacles, unprecedented since the Great Depression. If we keep on doing strategic planning without adequate consideration of these conditions, organizations will flounder even more. Unfortunately, most organizations do not even know how to identify these conditions, let alone what to do about them.

What Differentiates Stellar from Mediocre Strategic Planning

You've probably heard the term bantered about many times—*large-scale strategic planning*. And you've probably even heard such mantras as strategic planning doesn't work, so why bother? In this session you'll get a heavy dose of bottom-line reality. You'll discover what differentiates stellar from mediocre strategic planning. In a nutshell, this session will take a hands-on approach validated by the latest research on strategic planning.

Large-Scale Strategic Planning Is More Than Numbers!

Dr. Mitchell Kusy has not only consulted internationally on large-scale approaches to strategic planning to some of the top organizations, he has published extensively in this arena. During this session, he'll share his practice-based insights including:

- The need for a planning-to-plan team in all strategic planning endeavors, bar none.
- Assessment of the four levels of uncertainty based on our downturned economy *and* matching the strategy to the level.
- The primary decision-making parameters—whether you have 10 in the session or 1,000.
- Prioritization processes for decision-making.
- Parameters for participant selection.
- How to handle executives' anxieties associated with “giving away the store.”

Does Your Organization Know How to Assess Its Level of Uncertainty?

While I continue to incorporate some of the benchmarks for successful strategic planning I have always used with my clients, I have added a significant twist—understanding the level of uncertainty that affects future productivity.

Levels of Uncertainty & Methods Used to Arrive at Appropriate Strategies

This strategic planning process is based on the work of many researchers (e.g. Courtney; Boin, McConnell, & Hart; Wheatley). Using a large-scale, “diagonal organizational slice” approach, I have synthesized the research of Courtney into the following actions:

- *Level 1 uncertainty—A clear enough view of the future:*
 - Porter's Five Forces analysis
 - Critical market research
 - Benchmarking “like” and “unlike” industries
 - SWOT analysis—internal and external
 - Development of core competencies
- *Level 2 uncertainty—Alternate futures:*

- Decision trees
- Scenario planning
- Assessment of how each potential strategy alters the probability of each scenario
- Benefits of each scenario
- *Level 3 uncertainty—range of futures:*
 - Level 2 methods plus the following:
 - Integration of experiential “business/organizational judgment” variables
- *Level 4 uncertainty—True ambiguity:*
 - Work “backwards” to what you believe about the future to support your strategy
 - Use of analogies
 - Integration of key market indicators

Potential Results for Your Organization

- Better manage the fallout of the current crisis
- Incubate the most relevant knowledge and experiences
- Develop the most appropriate core competencies
- Use “uncertainty stressors” to increase productivity
- Incorporate the diversity of multiple stakeholders to better understand:
 - What is going on,
 - What might happen next, and
 - What it means to them.