

# Getting the Most From Your Organization

Excerpted from Greg Bustin's new book, **How Busy CEOs Turn Time into Profit** to be published Fall 2007

Whether you're a CEO leading an entire organization, a senior executive running a division, or a manager responsible for a department, it's your job to make certain your leadership team is aligned around a common goal, executing crisply, and holding one another accountable.

Why are these three things so important? Because they represent essential building blocks for ensuring your organization is achieving its full potential.

Leaders who are consistently successful at achieving their objectives have a plan that they work.

In just two months, leaders will start sizing up their plans, processes and people as they evaluate this year's results and start planning for 2008.

As the leader, you're responsible for getting the most effective performance from your colleagues in order to deliver fully and consistently on your organization's mission. To achieve and sustain this high level of performance, there are 14 important questions you must ask and answer before even thinking about assembling your team for a planning session.

Here are two.

## **When should you plan?**

The best time to plan is in the fourth quarter of your fiscal year. That's because your current year is complete enough to assess past performance (which is part of the process) before looking ahead and developing plans for the next fiscal year. Even if your business is seasonal, you've probably already got a pretty good idea of how you'll finish the year. Often, whether or not companies run their fiscal year on a January-December calendar, the period between Labor Day and Thanksgiving is another good time to hold your planning session. Perhaps it's the back-to-school mentality when summer vacations are behind us and company leaders return to more of a routine. I've facilitated planning sessions in the middle of summer, two weeks before Christmas and right after the first of the year. It can happen anytime. Don't confine your planning to a once- or twice-a-year event if there are pressing opportunities or challenges to address. When scheduling your planning session, select days that work best for you and your team, and give people enough notice so that they can clear their

calendars. If some people must travel to attend the session, consider ways to minimize their time out of the office as well as time away from families. The main thing to keep in mind is that some times of the year are better for your business than other times, but anytime is better than not at all.

## **Who should attend?**

Think carefully about who should attend the planning session. Most planning sessions will involve eight to 12 leaders. The group size can grow, but 20 participants (with some exceptions like planning for churches, schools, other not-for-profit organizations, government entities or Fortune 500 companies) should be the top end of your planning group. Everyone who reports directly to you should attend. All senior decision-makers with P&L responsibility. Partners, if that's how your organization is structured, should be there. What about board members and investors? You know their objectives and they should already be telling you what they think of your performance. Their participation at a planning session can be a distraction. Inform them of the outcomes of your planning session, but think twice about inviting them to participate. [If your organization is a not-for-profit entity, it's essential that board members be invited – and expected – to participate.] Are there people in your company whose industry or company knowledge makes their attendance worthwhile? Invite them. Many times, more than one sales person is included to obtain their perspective and to help them fully appreciate the issue faced by the rest of the organization. There may be others viewed as influential leaders even though their responsibility is limited. Consider the impact their participation in and commitment to the plan will have on the planning group and the company as a whole. Once you've determined who will attend, extend the invitation personally and help each invitee appreciate that their involvement in the planning process is an honor and privilege. Your choice of attendees determines what is discussed, what is decided and what will be done to help your company improve.

If you're interested in receiving for free all 14 questions to help get the most out of your organization, or you would like to order an advance copy of Greg Bustin's new book or you would like to visit with him about facilitating your next planning session, simply email Greg Bustin at [greg.bustin@bustin.com](mailto:greg.bustin@bustin.com). ■