

## ISSUE 2, SEPTEMBER 2003

Welcome to the second edition of *Nexus News*. This quarterly newsletter focuses on common and current issues that face the public sector.

Judging by the response to our last newsletter on the planning process, we've clearly touched a nerve. Lots of readers commented on how convoluted their organisation's business plans are, and how they wished they were easier to follow. In response, this newsletter looks at the factors that unnecessarily complicate business plans, before providing you with a framework that's been designed to help simplify the planning process.

### PLANNING 101 – GOING BACK TO BASICS TO RESCUE YOUR BUSINESS PLAN

Don't you just love it when a plan comes together? The problem is, most people's automatic response is to flinch whenever the word 'plan' is mentioned. If the concept is much maligned in your organisation, here are a few possible reasons why:

#### *TMA – Too Many Acronyms*

It's ironic how in a bid to make the message of a business plan crystal clear, a host of phrases and acronyms are thrown in which end up making it indecipherable to anyone without an MBA (that's a Masters of Business Administration).

#### *Death by detail*

It doesn't take long for a plan replete with jargon to become unwieldy. Clunky sentences constructed by committee can end up making your plan look like the small print in a legal document. And who enjoys reading small print? Exactly. In a fight between clarity and semantics, clarity will lose every time. When you stray too far from the plain English style of communicating, your plan's destined to lose credibility amongst your staff and stakeholders.

#### *Reinventing the wheel*

'Change fatigue' is a phrase creeping into the lexicon of organisations that've watched as an array of plans have come and gone with seemingly little effect. The 'rip it up and start again' approach almost invariably entails throwing the baby out with the bathwater.

#### ADDING VALUE

At Nexus Management Consulting, we assist organisations to change for the better through providing a range of services in the following areas:

**Strategic & corporate planning**, to enable you to create and achieve your organisational aspirations.

**Program evaluation**, to ensure your goals, strategies and outcomes are on track.

**Management review & organisation development**, to help you cultivate a self-sustaining, inclusive organisational environment.

**Group facilitation**, to ensure your meetings and focus groups adhere to a relevant agenda and produce meaningful results.

**Strategic management training**, to transfer skills so that your organisation develops the internal capacity to create enduring change.

On the other hand, look closely at plans which find traction, and you'll see how they have taken into consideration the historical and current forces that are affecting the organisation.

If your business plan's ability to communicate its message has been blighted, the idea of keeping it simple should feel like a breath of fresh air. Pared down to its kernel, the planning process requires you to ask three questions:

1. *Where are we heading?*  
When considering this, remember to take into account the direction you've come from. Fail to keep this in mind, and your goals will have all the lasting qualities of sky writing in a high wind.
2. *How will we get there?*  
Once you know where you are heading, you can focus your efforts on how you're going to achieve your goals. Once you have ascertained what's required (e.g. staff training, marketing) consider what resources are available to fuel your progress.
3. *How will we know how we're going?*  
When the intended outcomes have been agreed, it's time to assess: *what* needs doing in order to get there, *when* and by *whom*. This provides you with an accurate way of gauging whether or not the goals set have been achieved successfully.

On the next page you'll find a natty planning framework which can be used to help you achieve your desired outcomes on an organisational, departmental or, indeed, personal level.

#### HOW NEXUS CAN HELP

Our aim is to get public sector and community organisations take the first step towards change for the better. [Email](#) to find out how we can be of benefit to your organisation by helping you simplify your planning process. For example we can assist in a review of your current planning processes. Plus we can help keep planning sessions on track by providing facilitation to help keep the group focused.

#### CONTACT US

Please continue to direct your ideas and comments to [gmasters@nexusmc.com.au](mailto:gmasters@nexusmc.com.au). If you'd like to see an article covering a particular issue, please let us know.

#### SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION

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#### ABOUT NEXUS MANAGEMENT CONSULTING

Established by Greg Masters in 1996, Nexus is a management consultancy based in Sydney, Australia.

It's our specialist expertise in public sector organisational dynamics that makes us unique. We get to the heart of organisational challenges, and implement actions that succeed in overcoming them.

Nexus | Planning Framework

