The Australian Strategic Planning Institute

Executive Leadership Checklist -
Topic: Environmental Scanning (ES)

Overview

In working with organisations our research suggests that fewer than 25% of businesses engage in a regular process of Environmental Scanning. Fewer still leverage this type of intelligence in their Strategic Planning initiatives

ES is the process of ongoing and active attempts by an organisation to better understand potential changes in their operating environment. It is a deliberate area of focus that seeks the early signals of both emerging risk and emerging opportunity.

ES adds significant value is in the way it broadens an organisation focus away from the 'here and now', to include a wider array of available information, as well as in extending the time frames through which preparation and strategy formation can occur. It alerts senior manager's to 'information of note' far earlier than typical business information processes allow.

Set Up – Internal and Collective model

This processes is quick and uses the collective intelligence of your staff to provide input

- Tends to be quicker to gather data inputs
- Typically low cost
- In initial stages acts to broaden focus but this tends not to develop further overtime
- Allows everyone to have input as they see fit based on their own interests
- Ultimately requires a 'sifting' of input for quality of data over time
- Can be a great way to identify an internal candidate to be given 'assigned focus'

Set Up – External and Assigned focus model

This process assigns an ES function to a specific person/unit within your business

- Tends to take a little longer to get 'up to speed' due to identification of external areas of value
- Requires specific allocation of resources
- Usually leads to greater breadth of scanning and ultimately quality of it
- Can sometime fall into trap of a singular array of focus based on perceived value (bias trap)
- 'Lack of ownership' of scanning data if focus is too narrow

Scanning Methodology

1. Ask everyone to consider the businesses' operating environment and things that may impact upon it

2. Ask everyone to think about their personal interests and to identify things they might see, hear or learn, that could impact upon your sector

3. Have each person add one item to a Scanning Folder each month that

Scanning Methodology

1. Have unit begin to identify areas of interest on the periphery of your sector – consider websites, journals, university early research reports etc

2. Identify any sources of information about those areas of interest and begin to regularly review them for items of interest

3. Store items in a folder, retrievable through a search function format (we'd recommend

provides an overview of the scanning item and how they feel it might have an impact on the business	the VSTEEP process)
4. Enable the folder to be accessed by anyone at any time as they see fit	4. Produce a monthly report that covers some of the interesting items each month, including an assessment of potential implications and deliver it to senior managers – ensure report is also available to all staff
Additional Tips You will need to continue to encourage contributions from your staff Overtime you will need to highlight the preferred items of interest and preferred analysis (whilst avoiding a quashing' of enthusiasm)	**Additional Tips** Where possible, refresh your Environmental Scanning Analyst at least every 18 months Occasionally test both the areas of scanning focus and the potential interpretations for a narrowing of focus and 'bias' creeping in

Sorting and Categorising Data

Filling a folder full of data will be of minimal value to you if the organisation is unable to retrieve that data when they need to. As such you will need to consider the way in which data can be sorted and retrieved. In working with clients and for our own scanning we use a VSTEEP model (Values, Societal, Economic, Environmental, Political) which enables us to tag each item based on the themes that appear within it, and therein easier to search and retrieve when required.

Whatever sorting category you use, you'll need to ensure that everyone understands the importance of using the same approach, as well as making it is easy enough for people to apply.

Potential Places to Start	Site Overview (F) = Free (S) = Subscribe
http://www.foodweek.com.au/	An Australian site that provides an overview of developments within the food industry here in Australia and overseas (F)
www.downes.ca	The website for Canadian Educational Technologist Stephen Downes – wide and detailed coverage of emerging and current issues in the Education sphere (F)
www.kurzweilai.net	US site of Inventor and futurist Ray Kurzweil provides links to emerging areas of research in fields like nano technology, augmented intelligence, software developments, automation and more (F) & (S)
www.shapingtomorrow.co.uk	UK site of a futures based repository offering both scanning hits and intelligence reports across a wide array of items from around the world (F) & (S)
www.stratfor.com	US site with a very strong bias towards governance, energy and military issues around the world (S)
www.lufg.com.au	Australian based Looking Up Feeling Good Pty Ltd provide a scanning report service tailored specifically to your company (S)