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| Creating Your Action Plans |

The best ideas are of little value if they simply remain ideas. Putting your work unit’s solutions into practice will require careful,

thorough planning. Taking the time to build an action plan and a strategy for implementation greatly improves the chances that your

group’s ideas for improvement will become reality.

**THE ACTION PLANNING PROCESS**

Building an effective action plan involves the following steps:

1. Select a survey item. Choose the survey item or group of items most closely related to the issue your work unit wishes to

 address. Typically these items will be those with lower performance scores.

2. Define the issue. What is the situation or problem you’re attempting to address through your action plan? Refer to

 *Understanding Issues* in the Action Planning Tip Guides for ideas on how to define the issue with your work unit.

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| 3. Identify your plan type. There are three types of action plans: organization, work unit and manager. The type of plan, often related to the domain of the survey item you are addressing, indicates who will be responsible for creating, implementing, and monitoring progress of the associated action plan. An organization plan is for the entire organization or entity; these are usually done by senior management or a cross-functional task force. A work unit plan is for the group or combination of groups that you manage. A manager plan is your personal plan for individual improvement. |  |

4. Set a goal. In measurable terms, specify what you hope to accomplish with your plan. The more precise you are in setting a

 goal, the better your chance of success.

5. Show how you’ll measure success. Be as specific as possible. Using the results of the next survey is an excellent method of

 tracking improvement on a specific item. You may also consider using other measures that enable you to track progress more

 frequently. The more precise you are in setting goals, the better your chances of effecting change and being able to measure it

 when it occurs.

6. Project a completion date. Set a date by which you expect to complete the entire plan as outlined.

7. List action steps. An action plan consists of a series of steps that need to be taken in order to achieve the stated goal. Avoid

 vague statements such as “Improve the performance appraisal system by rewriting it” or “Develop a new performance

 appraisal system.” Global missions like these are more difficult to achieve and evaluate. You can break steps down into

 smaller tasks if they’re to be assigned to different group members. For all actions, be sure to get the group’s consensus that

 they need to be taken.

8. Identify who’s responsible. For each action step, identify an individual or a specific team who will be held accountable for its

 completion. As steps are suggested, enthusiastic members will sometimes volunteer. These offers should be tentatively

 encouraged, and then re-evaluated later to be sure they are a good fit in terms of the overall strategy. Consider desire, ability

 and workload in making assignments. Share your rationale for assignments. The action steps to be taken by individual group

 members should be clearly defined. Each group member’s responsibilities should be clarified and acknowledged by the

 individual.

9. Show how you’ll measure step completion. Make sure both the individual assigned a step and your work unit agrees about

 what constitutes successful completion of a given task.

10. Establish projected step completion dates. Once assignments have been made, individuals should commit to realistic deadlines.

11. Track actual completion dates. Be sure to track when each step is in fact completed. This enables you to easily adjust the

 schedule when steps are completed earlier or later than expected.

A copy of the action plan form which you will use, along with an example of a completed plan, can be found at the end of this document. The form is set up as a template, so you can use it to create your action plans. Enter all plan information and save or print just the form pages (without the leading instructions or sample plan).

If your organization has purchased Morehead’s Web-based Action Planning System option, you will want to create your action plans online instead, but you will follow the same essential steps.

SUMMARIZING THE ACTION PLAN

A summary of the actions, responsibilities and deadlines reinforces commitment and helps ensure there are no misunderstandings. In summarizing, emphasize the following points:

 The group should identify positive and negative forces that could affect progress. Members should have a realistic sense of

 the support they can count on as well as what might impede their progress.

 Members should ask questions about their assignments.

 Members should ask for help quickly if they experience problems.

 You should express your confidence in the team’s ability to follow through.

 Copies of action plans should be distributed to all members of the work unit.

ENSURING PROGRESS

An effective team leader assumes responsibility for the group’s progress in finding solutions and implementing them. Steady progress is essential to maintaining interest and momentum. The entire action planning effort suffers when individuals fail to complete their assignments. Interest wanes, frustration sets in and cynicism blooms. To avoid this, your job is to follow up on action planning activities and review progress.

In assuming this responsibility, you’ll play several roles: mentor, cheerleader and, at times, enforcer. You should establish the

following norms:

 Individual commitments to action planning must be honored.

 Progress reports on steps taken to implement a solution will be made on a regular basis. Progress (or lack of it) will be

 reported to the entire group.

 The group will review and evaluate action planning progress. It will determine what adjustments should be made in response

 to new information or unforeseen obstacles.

 Specific reporting dates will be set at least for the first action steps to make sure the process is off to a good start. It should

 be clear who will report on which steps.

As leader of the action planning process, you should:

 Regularly review action plans on a step-by-step basis. This helps highlight the work the team agreed to accomplish.

 Ask work unit members to report on action items. Giving them an opportunity to report underscores their accountability

 and provides an occasion for recognition.

 Report on your own action planning progress. Share with the work unit the status of your own action planning.

 Reinforce completed actions. Express appreciation and note the value of timely completion in advancing the group’s progress.

 Deal effectively with steps not completed. As leader, you need to determine the reason for lack of completion, emphasize

 the importance of completion and explore ways of carrying out the step.

 Make note of changes made as a result of survey feedback. This can occur at regular department meetings, employee

 forums, through the employee newsletter, etc. Make clear the link between the survey feedback and changes implemented.

Remember—action planning doesn’t end. It’s an iterative process in which improvement occurs through ongoing evaluation, measurement, and adjustment of actions to achieve the desired results.

Employee Opinion Survey Action Plan

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| Manager/Leader: | Plan Type: |
| Work Unit: |
| Date: |
| Survey Item #: | Survey Item: |
| Define the Issue: | Our Goal: |
|  | Our Overall Measure of Success: |
| Projected Completion Date: |

Action Steps

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Steps(What steps will be takento achieve the goal?) | Person(s) Responsible(Who is accountable?) | Measure of Success (How will successful completion of each step be measured?) | “Complete By” Date (When will each step be completed?) | Actual Date Completed (When was the step completed?) |
| 1. |  |  |  |  |
| 2.  |  |  |  |  |
| 3.  |  |  |  |  |
| 4.  |  |  |  |  |
| 5.  |  |  |  |  |
| 6.  |  |  |  |  |
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Sample Action Plan:

Employee Opinion Survey Action Plan

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| --- | --- |
| Manager/Leader: Jane Doe | Plan Type: Work Unit |
| Work Unit: Accounting & Finance |
| Date: 2/28/11 |
| Survey Item #: 14 | Survey Item: My last appraisal provided me with information I could use to improve my performance. |
| Define the issue: Only 20 percent of employees are satisfied with feedback on their performance. Many feel they aren't receiving regular or comprehensive performance evaluations. They feel the lack of specific, job-related feedback makes it difficult for them to know how to improve and how to advance in the organization. They want appraisals that are more accurate, fair and useful. | Our Goal: Increase satisfaction to 50 percent on the next survey by putting into place a formal performance evaluation system that includes standardized ratings. |
| Our Overall Measure of Success: Improvement on Item #14 on the next employee opinion survey to 50 percent favorable. |
| Projected Completion Date: 3/31/12 |

Action Steps

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Steps(What steps will be takento achieve the goal?) | Person(s) Responsible(Who is accountable?) | Measure of Success (How will successful completion of each step be measured?) | “Complete By” Date (When will each step be completed?) | Actual Date Completed (When was the step completed?) |
| 1. Review job descriptions with HR Director for the 7 hourly grade levels to determine the important skills and outcomes for each level.Revise as needed. | Jane Doe | All 7 grade levels have been reviewed with HR Director and revised descriptions are inplace. | 4/15/11 |  |
| 2. Design a draft standard performance evaluation form that includes evalu–ation criteria and rating scales for each level andreview with HR Director. | John Stokes | Evaluation forms, reviewed and approved by HR Director, are in draft form for all sevenlevels. | 5/1/11 |  |
| 3. Circulate draft evaluation form with cover memo to all employees, asking them to experiment with its usefulness and effectiveness, and suggest changes, during a six-month trial. | Jane Doe | Form is circulated. | 5/15/11 |  |
| 4. Create feedback questionnaire for employee input. | Lisa Williams | Questionnaire is created. | 5/15/11 |  |
| 5. Conduct trial evaluations using draft form during six-month trial and respond to questionnaire. | All employees | Trial evaluations are conducted; questionnaires are completed/submittedby all employees. | 6/1–12/01/11 |  |
| 6. Summarize questionnaire findings and modify form as needed. | Lisa Williams andJane Doe | Questionnaire summary report is written. | 1/1/12 |  |
| 7. Get employee approval of final form. | Jane Doe | Form is approved byA&F. | 1/15/12 |  |
| 8. Review form with HR, make changes as needed for final approval and inclusion in policy guidelines. | Jane Doe | Written policy is revised and reviewed then sent to CEO for approval. | 2/1/12 |  |
| 9. Communicate new performance evaluation system to A&F and use in all employee evaluations. | Jane Doe | New system used in all A&F employee appraisals. | 3/1/12 |  |