

# Your annual business plan

## Are you ready to fully execute your 2014 blueprints?

After careful planning to refresh company strategy, a major financial services company set aggressive objectives for the coming year. The executive team aimed to create a consistently outstanding customer experience across every access point.



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Leaders resolved to hire a new chief service officer, broaden the roles of field personnel to “quarterback” the service experience across product lines, shift to a customer-centric culture and provide technology that integrated customer support across all portals.

In addition to setting clear annual targets for revenue lift, share-by-region and so on, leaders developed a tactical action plan with aggressive, but reasonable, quarterly milestones to monitor progress.

By the end of the third quarter, the picture was already clear. They were achieving the action plan milestones, but not the results targets.

Why? The answer is that the company had not implemented changes in actual, daily behavior to underpin its tactical moves.

Field personnel were still operating within their specific areas of product expertise despite new job descriptions, training and processes. Service centers and branch offices were still providing conflicting advice to customers despite new technology to provide common information.

There was little evidence that the culture was changing, despite a well-intended corporate communications campaign.

### Beyond checklist management

Most organizations start their fiscal year with annual goals and execution plans. But only the best apply consistent practices that maximize their ability to deliver year after year.

Highly effective leaders venture beyond “checklist management” (completing one-and-done project milestones) and focus instead on essential, week-to-

week practices that foster high-impact behaviors — behaviors that ultimately drive new and better results.

As you think about your own readiness to achieve your annual plan this year, ask yourself:

- When your employees walked into work today, could a majority tell you the specific, new behaviors that will achieve the new results targets you are accountable for this year?
- Are they performing these behaviors consistently and consistently well?
- Are they performing the new behaviors because they want to, or because they feel they have to?

### Changing behavior

It's not enough to have clear annual targets or even aligned organizational changes.

Your annual planning must specifically examine the following: Which of our annual objectives are especially challenging and, of these, which require significant behavior change that is not likely to happen without special focus?

With the financial services company, executives could have devoted time to ask whose behavior — and what behavior — most directly impacts the daily customer experience. Further, what specific and direct behavior change plans would immediately accelerate this essential component of its success?

Companies who emphasize executive and employee behavior in their annual planning are surprised at the results. They routinely meet and exceed their most audacious goals, achieving historic revenue growth, unprecedented levels of cost reduction, record reliability and quality measures, industry-best safety records and industry awards for customer excellence.

It all starts with understanding that the right tactics get you started, but breakthrough results require new and different practices underneath it all — a behavior breakthrough, if you will.

As you commence your 2014 plan deployment, be sure to consider: Are you ready to fully execute the plan, including encouraging and sustaining the new behavior that you need to achieve new results? Are you sure? ●



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