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## NEWSLETTER

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#### Strategic Planning and Strategic Thinking

Strategic planning needs ongoing strategic thinking to be effective. "When executives create strategy, they project themselves and their organizations into the future. The strategy is a path from where they are now to where they want to be. In competitive markets, though, you need to be able to respond flexibly to what you learn on route" according to business professor, Timothy Leuhrman in his Harvard Business Review article, "Strategy as a Portfolio of Real Options."

The message is that strategic plans are essential, but they must be working documents. Your plan must facilitate strategic thinking every day of the week. Tragically, many organizations and businesses let their strategic plans become annual, beaucroatic nightmares. In his book, Strategy Pure & Simple, business consultant, Mike Robert, says, "in many organizations, strategic planning systems are the death knell of strategic thinking. Most strategic planning systems we have seen are nothing more than systems that force people to make extrapolations of historical numbers." He refers to the problem with this style as 'straight-ahead visioning'. The exercise resembles a mandatory fire drill. If this description sounds like your organization, you are not alone.

While nobody questions the need for a strategy to guide all the players in your organization, the problem seems to be the way that planning is done and how the organization sets about to embrace strategic

thinking. There is ample reason to question taking a lot of valuable personnel time to fill out plans if they are only referenced on anniversary dates.

So what do many successful organizations have in common when they strategically plan?

The first seems to be a clear direction for the organization. Bill Gates, Microsoft's founder, puts it this way: "Dreaming is zero-value. I mean anyone can dream. And it's therefore not a competitive advantage any way, shape or form...The big thing I do is I write down in a fairly crisp fashion what I believe the company should do. I let people know the basic framework we're in and then unleash their ingenuity to develop the projects that will get us there."

The second seems to be a perpetual approach to strategic planning. Real strategies are evolving plans and the evolution has to be clear and obvious to your organization. According to business professor, James Quinn, successful companies craft the implementation of their vision step by step, reassessing the key assumptions on which the vision was based as events unfold. He has seen lots of examples that prove this is superior to start-to-finish, once-a-year plans. His analogy is playing chess. You reassess the board after each move. Your plan can't possibly be strategic if you don't. So successful strategic plans have to obviously integrate into every day decisions and evolve as they do so.

As a closing example of the need for evolving plans, Strategy Pure & Simple gives this look at the photocopier business:

"One of the first companies to introduce a paper copier was 3M. But within a few years, 3M was out of the copier business. During our consulting work with 3M, we asked some of their executives to explain what had happened. 3M, they said, sold their machines to their customers. Xerox introduced copiers and started leasing them to its customers. The 3M executives could not figure out how Xerox could make money leasing machines. 3M could not bring themselves to understand the leasing business. As a result, they were paralyzed, sat on the sidelines, and watched Xerox take the market away. Xerox changed the rules of play!

A few years later, Canon came into the market with its copiers and changed the rules of play again. Xerox marketed its machines through a direct sales force. Canon started selling through distributors. While Xerox sat on the sidelines paralyzed, Canon gained a significant share of Xerox's market.

3M and Xerox failed to reassess their strategic thinking after every move.

Closing thoughts on strategic planning:

*"It's a more positive experience planning a bridge than putting sandbags on a levy"*

Tom Whiteside, IBM.

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## **Vegetable Industry Hearing**

The Commission convened a hearing on the issue of amending Regulation 440 to provide for the 'green shipping'/grading of cucumbers in Ontario. Green shipping refers to cucumbers that have been cleaned, graded and sized by a producer or dealer and are sold or resold respectively to processors. The three parties making presentations were the Ontario Vegetable Growers' Marketing Board, the Ontario Food Processors' Association and 814118 Ontario Ltd.

At issue in the hearing were the following considerations:

- Should green shipping/grading of cucumbers occur in Ontario and should it be licensed?
- Should a green shipper be treated in the regulations as a processor?
- Should a green shipper have the right to negotiate prices?
- What amendments are required to Reg. 440 if green shipping is to be accommodated in Ontario?

### **The Commission decided that:**

- Green shipping of cucumbers is an activity which should be allowed to take place in the Ontario vegetable industry.
- The definition of processing in Reg. 440 will be amended to clarify that processing does not include processes that are intended only to extend the storage of vegetables intended for resale for processing.
- That section 10 (a) of Reg. 440 be amended to delegate authority to the Vegetable Board to provide for the licensing of any or all persons before commencing or continuing to engage in the production or marketing of vegetables.
- The Vegetable Board be directed to amend its general regulations to accommodate the licensing of green shippers as buyers who shall have appropriate rights and obligations as terms of their license, other than the ability to negotiate vegetable prices with the Vegetable Board.
- The Vegetable Board be directed to amend its general regulations to clearly allow for the selling of vegetables between processors.

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## **OFPMC Update**

The following is a summary of issues recently addressed by the Ontario Farm Products Marketing Commission.

## **Pork Visioning**

The firm of Stitt Feld Handy Houston has been hired by the Commission and OMAFRA's Food Industry Division to facilitate the development of a strategy for the Ontario pork industry. Industry visioning discussions will wrap up by early fall.

### **Ice Wine Vote**

The Grape Growers' Marketing Board has requested that a Producer Expression of Opinion Vote be held to measure producer support for the inclusion of ice wine juice and late harvest juice in the Grape Plan.

### **Audit of Fund For Milk & Cream Producers**

The Commission reviewed and accepted the auditor's report on the Fund for Milk and Cream Producers for the year ended March 31, 1999. The balance was reported at \$3,981,237.

### **Ontario Turkey Producers' Marketing Board Review**

As part of its review, Board Chair, Art Roder, clarified their position on proposed changes to Federal-Provincial Agreements (FPA). The Turkey Board does not agree with the proposed one year notice period for a province to withdraw, preferring instead for the withdrawal period be tied to the quota year.

Commenting on Canadian Turkey Marketing Agency (CTMA). export policies, the Board stated that Ontario had been able to keep its share of total production by taking advantage of export policies and breeder policies which have allowed Ontario to produce more turkey. Recent changes to the export policy will, however, negatively impact Ontario.

At the same time, CTMA is supporting disproportionate growth among the provinces in order to allow the turkey industry to grow. Ontario's processors can accommodate such growth.

### **Dairy Regulation Amendments**

The Commission approved regulatory changes to allow Dairy Farmers of Ontario (DFO) to tighten their health and quality standards and increase the penalties for non-compliance.

To improve its detection system, DFO is paying for additional somatic cell counts to be done each month by the Central Milk Testing Lab. This will give producers test results four times per month rather than once.

In a separate regulatory change, food colouring and vitamins may now be added to flavoured milks and milk beverages.

### **Board Name Change**

The Ontario Seed Corn Growers' Marketing Board has received approval to formally change their name to the Seed Corn Growers of Ontario.

### **Industrial Egg Market**

The Commission was concerned that Canadian Egg Marketing Agency (CEMA) policies are not allowing Ontario egg processors to fill their markets. It was also concerned by the escalating use of supplemental imports to fill the provincial market.

### **Apple Commission Appointments**

Five appointments of non-producer members to the Apple Commission were approved by the Ontario Farm Products Marketing Commission. The candidates are suggested by the associations they are

intended to represent: Ontario Food Processors' Association; Ontario Apple Marketers Association; and the Consumers Association.

### **Apple Acreage Fees**

Changes were approved to Regulation 387 to allow for acreage fee changes for 1999.

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### **Upcoming OFPMC Seminar:**

### **Marketing Implications of Biotechnology**

The Commission's annual fall seminar will examine the marketing implications of biotech. The day long seminar will be held on November 12th at the Elm Hurst Inn, Ingersoll. The event is open to directors and senior staff of marketing boards and buyer/processor associations.

Registration information and the seminar agenda will be sent to boards and associations in September.

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