

THE SCHNEIDER REPORT

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Welcome to the Schneider Report,

This Schneider Report article is written by Tom Bresnan, CEO of Schneider Sales Management. Mr. Bresnan joined Schneider Sales Management in October, 2008 as an equity investor, board member and CEO. Prior to joining our firm, Mr. Bresnan was President and CEO of New Horizons Worldwide Inc., and Capitol American Financial, Inc.

Mr. Bresnan implemented key initiatives that helped New Horizons Worldwide, Inc. in becoming the world's largest information technology training company and Microsoft's largest global training partner. During his tenure, the company grew from \$14 million in revenue to more than \$100 million. Mr. Bresnan has expertise in managing a world-wide sales delivery network as well as profitability management.

Are You Really Ready for 2010?

Over the next few months most of us will be creating our 2010 business plans and budgets. It is vital to build these plans with a realistic and opportunistic mindset as we come off a most difficult, even brutal, 2009. It has not been "business as usual" for the last 12 to 18 months. So, why plan for "business as usual" in 2010?

If there is a bright side to the recession we have been through, it is that tough times allow innovative companies to change. As we have moved from a sense of panic in the financial markets, into a period of uncertainty and now progressing to a time of welcome stability, we see that forward-thinking financial institutions have used this time of turmoil to strengthen themselves. They have gotten leaner. They are growing market share at the expense of weakened competitors. They have added customers during this flight to safety and have done more to figure out the needs of existing customers. They have ignored the urge to cut costs and people in a simplistic, across-the-board way, but have chosen to invest appropriately for the long term in people, technology and processes that will give them competitive advantage for the next several years.

As you engage in your 2010 planning, ask yourself the following questions to gauge whether you are defining a "business as usual" 2010 for your institution or business unit, or a new year that reflects real change and truly improved performance.

1. Are your goals and objectives based on a reaction to competitors and market conditions, or are they based on making your institution more competitive and growing market share?

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2. Are your goals, objectives and financial plans supported by initiatives that are clear and specific, measurable through metrics and understood by your staff and/or the entire organization? Do they cascade through the organization in a way that all business unit plans are aligned?
3. Do you have the right people in place to deliver the performance you are expecting in 2010? Are they focused on the right things, incented in the right way and held accountable for performance?
4. Does every person in the organization understand the importance of their job role and their individual contribution to achieving the goals, profit expectations and performance metrics you are defining?
5. For those of you that have underperforming businesses, are you developing a realistic plan that addresses the “heavy lifting” necessary to turn things around? Are you committed, and is your team committed, to fixing what is broken and to finally implementing the people or process changes that you know are needed to achieve your goals?

In 2010 it will be important to manage your business or your unit well. But, frankly, this is true every year. Because we are still coming through this time of challenge and turmoil, real leadership and true performance improvement are what is needed. When times are tough and there is uncertainty, real leadership and true performance improvement enables the winners to separate from the rest of the pack. Now is the time to sharpen your focus and shape your organization to be better and stronger than ever.

Organizations often fail to identify their best opportunities for profitable growth. Some may identify them at the senior executive or Executive Committee level, but fail to adequately communicate their strategies to their front-line staff. Still others may communicate their strategies, but fail to get alignment through the organization. As you can see, excellence in execution is hard, but the payback is terrific for those who can get the power of an informed and motivated staff behind their best opportunities.

Whether it is a sales plan to get the right kind of business, an initiative to massively ramp up referrals, a service quality program to counter expense cutbacks, putting the right incentive plans in place to retain top performers or getting a return on technology investments made, we have seen clients put an action plan behind a good idea and get results.

Lastly, I'd urge you to put an important level of energy into your planning initiatives over the next several months. It is surprising to me to often see some well-run

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institutions with smart people still finalizing their plans in January and February, and then maybe beginning implementation in March. Don't let a lack of urgency cause you to lose the entire 1st Quarter. Use the next few months to build the right plan and get alignment now, so that you hit the ground running in 2010 and move the organization forward as quickly as possible.

Thanks for your time. If your 2010 plans involve developing improved sales and sales management performance and processes, give us a call to see if we can help you.

About the Author

Tom Bresnan is CEO and President of Schneider Sales Management, LLC. He has extensive background in general management, training and sales management.



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