Business Resilience Toolkit

Planning for the future
Presented by Ellen Schuler, Business Consultant

Transcript:

Do you know if your organisation has the necessary resources and capabilities for the future? And do you have the necessary resources to adapt if things don't go to plan or to deal with a crisis?

Hi, my name is Ellen Schuler and I am a business consultant with Community Business Bureau.

Most certainly you have developed a strategic plan to plan for your organisation's future. But have you translated your plan into achievable goals?

It is critical to establish clear goals and define what success looks like. When planning your goals, the best advice is not to be overambitious and to carefully assess what your organisation can or cannot achieve. Goals need to be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time bound.

However, things don't always go to plan, so you also need to prepare for the unexpected. Experience has shown that organisations that do not restrict resources when dealing with a crisis or threat are more likely to pull through. Deploying additional resources can enable organisations to continue after a crisis.

Many organisations that invested into IT equipment and supported staff to work from home managed to work through COVID 19 with less disruption. Yet, many did not have the necessary financial cushion to allow for changes and flexibility.

In this video, we are going to look at key factors to consider in business planning. By developing a robust plan, you can mitigate risks that might come from unexpected events.

When you are working on achievable goals it is important to assess and plan what resources, funding, business processes and capabilities, you will need to achieve the goals.

This planning is based on various assumptions. Our assumptions tend to be based on our previous experience and the information we have available at that time. Assumptions are made around the circumstances or factors we think will be true in the future. Yet, if they are wrong, they can derail our entire strategy. If things don't go to plan, we get stuck as we did not plan for flexibility or plan B.

Recognising and documenting our assumptions are the first important steps to create better and more resilient plans. When assessing our assumptions, we can develop new ideas and create some flexibility in case our assumptions were wrong or if we must derail from our original plan.

Let's look at the different planning assumptions in more detail:

Resources

When planning our resources, we allocate the necessary people, materials, and facilities we need. If resources however become unavailable during the project the progress of achieving the goal can be heavily compromised. Also, if the contributions from resources are insufficient or if we identify that we in fact need more resources our work can be stalled.

Critically reviewing our resource planning and identifying our assumptions, will help to create some buffer and plan for contingencies.

Costs

Every resource comes with a cost and cost predictions are an essential part of project planning. Developing realistic budgets helps to keep the project costs within the budget. Generally, we have a good idea on our internal costs such as staff salaries however staff turnover staff or staff absence can increase our costs overnight. External factors such as market demand and economic conditions heavily impact on costs. Reviewing what could increase or decrease the cost of each of our resources can assist us to find alternative ways of doing our work or identify some cost savings.

It is critically important to monitor our financial cash reserves. Having sufficient reserves or liquid assets set aside to cover for unexpected costs can assist to overcome barriers along the way.

Business processes

We tend to plan around our existing processes however new projects with more people involved may require some streamlining. This could be achieved with new technology. Technology resources do not only include hard and software like computers, tablets, and phone, but also IT support and time for trialling, learning and adaptation. While this will increase the cost of any project, they could create savings in the long term. When planning our business process, we should always aim to do better and consider technological advancements. Any technology can be impacted by availability, suitability, and technical difficulties. Identifying what problems could occur will help prepare and mitigate the risks.

Capabilities

When planning for the future we easily overlook the skills and capabilities required to succeed. Key person risk arises if we rely too heavily on one or a handful of individuals whose skills are essential for our operation. Identifying the key individuals when planning can help us develop a succession plan. We could train additional staff members, allow the staff members to mentor less experienced staff or we could identify external talents that could assist. Documenting tasks can also help to manage key-person risk.

Time

Time can be our worst enemy and we easily make false assumptions when planning timelines. Building contingencies can allow for more realistic timeframes. The availability of critical resources can impact on progress and any progress delay can increase costs overnight. Delays and lack of resources should be considered when planning and possible alternative options considered in advance.

For future success we need to establish realistic and achievable goals and plan for necessary resources, costs, business processes, capabilities, and timeframe. During the planning process we should review our assumptions as this can help us to recognise that some things may not go to plan or that any crisis could disrupt our operation. Regular review and discussion and commitment to do better can help us become more flexible in how we achieve our goals and get us prepared and more adaptable.

Related video to watch next: External Drivers and Forces Impacting on Costs.