



### **President's Column** **Repeating the Past**

*"Those who don't know history are destined to repeat it."*

*- Edmund Burke  
1729-1797*

Human nature is slow to change.

As a result, smart strategic thought should always begin with an understanding that plans are made by people, and will succeed or fail based on the confidence of those who must follow them.

#### **Parallel Groups**

Understanding how groups that are parallel to your own have behaved in the past under similar circumstances (and to what end) can be critical to achieving a meaningful result and is at least as important as well developed numbers and precise technical specifications.

But that is only a beginning.

November 2008

### **Planning** **BUILDING ON THE BEST FOR THE WORST (Part 2)**

*Please consider the argument heard from various levels of management when asked to focus on planning, particularly during periods of heavy competition or threat.*

*"I am too busy doing my job to deal with all this planning!"*

The problem with this statement is that it defines planning as something other than a continuing responsibility of leadership, and leaves little prospect for responding to real threats in a measured fashion.

#### **A Common Error**

One of the most common errors in corporate culture, (but one that is easily fixed), is to perpetuate an assumption that the act of planning is in some way an interference with either day to day work or prompt response to threats.

An equally troublesome error lies in the argument: "I have proven my success and know my area better than anyone else," and, therefore, the need for planning has now decreased.

The best way to contend with this natural inclination is to bake a responsibility right into senior management's job description not just for planning, but for communicating planning results in a measured fashion.

#### **Basic Protocols**

To strengthen the group's position in the world and properly prepare for adversity, all groups should adopt a set of basic planning protocols.

1. All planning should be calendar driven and not be allowed to stop (or even pause)



### **BizSpeak:** **Godzilla**

#### **Definition:**

We all know him. He crushes everything and everyone in his path. And what he doesn't crush, he BURNS.

#### **Related Terms:**

Bruiser,  
Big Bopper

#### **How it Sounds:**

"The head of H.R. played GODZILLA all month with the sector managers.

The screams and whimpers were terrible to hear."

*Watch for more BizSpeak definitions in future editions of The Agenda*

**For More BizSpeak, check out the Book.**

**Click here.**

**Trust in Leadership**

To make the resulting concepts work, trust in leadership is critical. The best plans rely on the combination of a solid assessment of reality merged with logic and imagination. The best execution relies on communication and a sustained confidence in the leadership's vision.

Confusing what we wish might become real with the actuality of current circumstance, is a set-up for disaster. We are now at the receiving end of this concept in the melt-down of parts of our macro- financial system.

If there is a lesson for us individually as leaders, it may be this... Please remember to step outside your planning and look back with an eye for what happened in the past to groups like your own, as well as at how your plan is likely to be received by those who must enact it.

**A solid understanding**

The good news is that even in the worst of times, some groups do very well, and, since these are definitely not the worst of times, careful forethought based on a solid understanding of both current realities and the shape of the past sets up a solid prospect for success.

Best wishes,

*Marc Paul Chinoy*

unless the group is confronted by a circumstance that is cataclysmic in nature. In fact, failing to plan on a timely basis during a crisis is often the fastest way to perpetuate those conditions that precipitated the crisis in the first place.

2. All managers should be made aware that the act of planning combined with the timely (prompt) communication of the result of those efforts, are critical job functions, not just inconveniences.
3. Be aware that planning for an action is a different discipline from managing the resulting initiatives. Those skills necessary to either conduct, or significantly contribute to planning are learned functions, which means that unless and until they are learned, they do not exist. Knowing an area well does not automatically equate to being able to plan strategic moves for that area.
4. A plan without well defined results, is little more than a general intention.
5. Since the best plans are actually promises, compensation and promotion should be pegged directly to the success of the planned objectives, both in terms of how well they were conceived and also in terms of their completion.
6. Since conditions (particularly competitive effort) are constantly changing, all planned initiatives should be monitored and measured, with an eye for orderly adjustment as needed, without reconstructing the entire focus in an ad hoc fashion.

The best plans are tangible, comprehensible AND inventive. The ability to both plan AND react should always be an integral part of all corporate structures. The skills and talents necessary should be both sought out and constantly enhanced. Anything less increases the risk of being blind-sided over time.

***Part I and other back copies of The Agenda can be accessed at:***

[The Agenda](#)

**Next Month: "How to handle the current downturn"**

**Focus on the Future**  
**Guest Predictions: Pat Monaco**



Pat Monaco

*Guest Predictions is a regular Agenda feature in which we interview leaders in a number of professions for their opinion on questions that effect us all.*

*Patricia Monaco, MBA, is President and CEO of Northeast Pharmacy Service Corp., in Framingham, MA, an organization she's been with since 1992. Pat and her husband Steve live in Connecticut with their dog MacKenzie, and cat Mickey Blue. Pat's hobbies are cooking and gardening.*

**Q: What changes in your professional environment in the past 3-5 years have you found to be the most beneficial?**

**A:** The use of the Internet for communication, research, and connection. The use of e-mail as an accepted method of professional communication, speeding up responses which allows more to be accomplished in a work day.

**Q: What changes have been the most troubling to you?**

**A:** Too many changes! For providers, constant shifts in federal government rules and regulations without working solutions that offer actual corrections to recognizable problems. Pharmacy costs are one of the targets for scrutiny. Consequently, pharmacy has been the whipping boy for healthcare, in many cases reducing face to face care, that in turn leads to an unsupervised commodity business. Once again, patients lose.

**Q: How will globalization (e.g. the emergence of new global powers, such as China and India) affect your professional area in the near term?**

**A:** I believe that a large percentage of new U.S. pharmacy owners will be foreign-born. These "New Americans" are looking for the American Dream and willing to work very hard for their chance at ownership. Unfortunately, that sweat equity drive seems to be a rarity in U.S. born pharmacy students.

**Q: What significant challenges might be anticipated in your professional area in the next few years?**

**A:** Legitimate Internet pharmacy is around the corner along with further direct commoditization of drugs, which is un-secure and unsafe for patients. The reason that a pharmacist is between the doctor and the patient is for the face-to-face "check in" that is lost in the mail, on the phone or on the computer. Dollars in pure pharmacy may be saved, but my guess is they show up in greater spends in other sectors of care. On the bright side, healthcare services will be in great demand due to our aging population. Those

pharmacists, who are willing to invest in niche markets and prepared to meet the needs of aging baby-boomers, will be very successful.

**Q: What are the greatest challenges confronting young professionals in Western culture today?**

**A:** The challenge is not education but the ability to apply what they know, be able to multi-task and to blend into a team environment. These important abilities are not easily found in today's young professionals, whose formative years began as the first generation embedded in a de-personalized Internet culture. Young western-cultured professionals will have more competition from foreign young professionals that will do more, work harder and longer, for less.

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The Regis Group, Inc.  
102 North King Street | Leesburg, VA 20176 | 703 777-2233 | [www.regisgroup.com](http://www.regisgroup.com)

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