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Strategic Planning: Key to Your Organization's Safer Future

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In the last six months there have been multiple hurricanes across the Gulf coast, southeastern, and East Coast states, wildfires through out the Southwest, earthquakes in California, volcanic eruptions in the Pacific Northwest, tsunamis threats in our Pacific extensions, and flooding and tornadoes across many parts of the Midwest. No part of this country is safe from these devastating natural disasters.

These natural disasters are not unexpected, and we're certainly not totally unprepared for them, but they are hard to predict with much accuracy. They're devastating in terms of loss of life, assets, production capability, security, and most of all freedom. But what about the violent and destructive events and conditions that aren't very predictable at all, such as terrorist attacks; how do we expect and prepare for them?

It has been in only the last fifty years that wide spread use of strategic planning methods has become much more sophisticated and common in most sectors of our modern economic societies. In the 1970's, with the proliferation of highly skilled management consulting groups, and the development of more reliable computer models and other planning techniques, the whole concept and practice of strategic planning became better known and more available to most organizations.

The SWOT Analysis, one method of strategic planning, is a process, which systematically examines an organization's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (s-w-o-t). This method has been very useful in crafting strategic objectives to guide organizational planning and operations toward expected future opportunities and away from likely threats.

Threats to our global, national, organizational, and personal security from a growing number of terrorist elements looking to strike at any weakness are everywhere now. Therefore, the need today for every organization to have a strategic plan in place, based in part on a SWOT Analysis methodology, and acted upon through it's operations plan is absolutely essential.

Modern applications of strategic planning, using the SWOT Analysis, are readily available through many sources, but only a few consulting firms are adequately experienced with it in today's security and threat preparedness field. Here are the basics of the strategic planning process using the SWOT Analysis methodology.

The Step-by-Step Process

1. A systematic, step-by-step identification of the organization's stated values, purpose, mission, and vision – all usual and standard elements of the initial process.
2. A thorough analysis of the organization's key relationships with essential partners, suppliers, vendors, customers, and others, noting what is given and what is received by the two parties in each relationship.
3. A systematic evaluation of the organization's current strengths and weaknesses, based on observable evidence already known to the organization.

But given the heightened awareness required today to fully prepare for the new and often unknown threats to our way of life by terrorist interventions, special guidance is required by experienced security consultants to adequately lead organizations through the remaining steps of the standard strategic planning process.

4. Prediction of major events and conditions to occur within the next two-year planning horizon that will be highly likely and will have high impact (positive or negative) on the organization.
5. Detailed descriptions of opportunities and threats which legitimately can be expected to emerge from these predicted events and conditions.
6. Statements of key objectives with measurable results to guide the organization toward taking full advantage of key opportunities, and away from anticipated threats that could damage the organization, all within the new context of global terrorism.

Special care must be provided by outside consultants experienced in the threats of global terrorism for the organization to adequately develop these key objectives. These statements must guide the organization through a potentially dangerous but prosperous future. However, only small adjustments to the organization's existing culture or lifestyle or way of doing business to accommodate these new plans must be allowed, to avoid over-emphasizing negative conditions.

This greater preparedness must be achieved, but not at the expense of disrupting the success of the organization's traditional values and operations. Only skilled consultants experienced in dealing with global terrorism can provide the kind of guidance necessary to achieve the specific strategic planning results so vital to today's organization preparing for a prosperous but safer future.