

Planning Possibilities

News & views brought to you by Michelle Coussens

Welcome to my October 2018 Issue!

There's planning, and then there's life. I wish I could say that putting together plans guarantees us success and happiness, but unfortunately, that would be a lie. However, planning can help us sidestep at least some issues. And, it can allow us to identify and explore possible outcomes so we are better able to contend with them, should they occur.

I not only plan, but I update my plans on a frequent basis. They are a living guide to help me continue to adjust my journey as I move forward. I hope you enjoy this newsletter and some things I have learned, and continue to learn, so far.

Michelle

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PLAN B CONSULTING MISSION STATEMENT

To assist organizations in becoming more effective and efficient through practical business planning, resulting in meaningful and measurable outputs, outcomes, and impact.

Planning for Good Decisions

How can an organization ensure the link and alignment of projects to strategy? The answer requires integration of projects with the strategic plan. Integration assumes the existence of a strategic plan and a process for prioritizing projects by their contribution to the plan. The intended outcomes are clear organization focus, best use of scarce organization resources (people, equipment, capital) and improved communication across projects and departments.



Prepare
Communicate
Execute

The project selection funnel



Planning is an art, not a science. It is a process directed toward making today's decisions with tomorrow in mind. It is a means of preparing for future decisions so that they may be made rapidly, economically, and with as little disruption to the business as possible. And, planning is much more than mere forecasting. Forecasting considers future changes and determines how they may impact the organization and its results. It involves projecting what is likely to happen in the future, considering driving factors both inside and outside of an organization. Planning takes forecast information, sets goals and objectives, and develops strategies to meet them. These strategies lead to initiatives, which become project options.

Planning Predicaments: Can you plan for relationships?

*Where
planning
concepts
meet
reality*

I do a lot of planning. I mean, I do it for a living, but I also do it for myself, both for my business and for my personal life. Many of us plan schedules, budgets, vacations, resource needs, etc. etc. But, do we spend enough time planning for relationships? Should we map out who we know and then decide who we are spending our time with, and then who we should be spending our time with? Should we deliberately prioritize when and how we interact with others?

Does that sound too rigid? Too nerdy? Too non-organic? What is the alternative? Is it better to just take relationships as they come? Spend time with people as they cross our paths? Is there a middle-ground?

Online Plug of the Month



This month, I am sharing the URL for a press release showing the degree of diversity in television directing jobs. You may not be in that industry, but reviewing this data may not only affect your understanding of how that industry is changing but may inspire you to find out more about where diversity stands in your own industry and what the associated implications may be.

Check it out at:
<https://pmcvariety.files.wordpress.com/2018/10/episodic-television-diversity-report-embargoed-10-10-2018.pdf>

Communication Corner

When I was Dean of Business for the Kendall College School of Business, I held numerous professional development workshops. One workshop was on body language, an important part of communication. One of my contacts, Bev Chana is an experienced communicator who came and provided invaluable tips. Interested in learning more about how you can better communicate through how you carry yourself? Then check out the recorded videos, which while focused on women, contains universally-applicable tips for all. The videos are still available on YouTube in four parts.

Part One is at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NLbfM-jq1dM&t=1s>
Part Two is at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1_AS0WIDM-k&t=9s
Part Three is at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5CCxuql5dFQ>
Part Four is at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=okWWvmGTURQ>



Book Banter

Appreciative Inquiry: Research for Change, by Jan Reed, Sage Publications, 2007.

If you follow my reviews, you will have noticed that I just recently posted my review of another book on appreciative inquiry on Goodreads. Unlike that book, I found this one to be fairly practical. In addition, this author compares and contrasts AI ("appreciative inquiry") with learned helplessness, continuous improvement, and other deficit-based methods. The principles referenced in the other book I read are also discussed here, but with more matter-of-fact explanations. For instance, "The Constructivist Principle," is based on the notion that we each interpret the world differently through our own unique lenses (hence the pop culture terminology that is prevalent today of "his truth," "her truth," "my truth" etc.), and that these truths are relevant and important to uncover and consider in addition to facts.

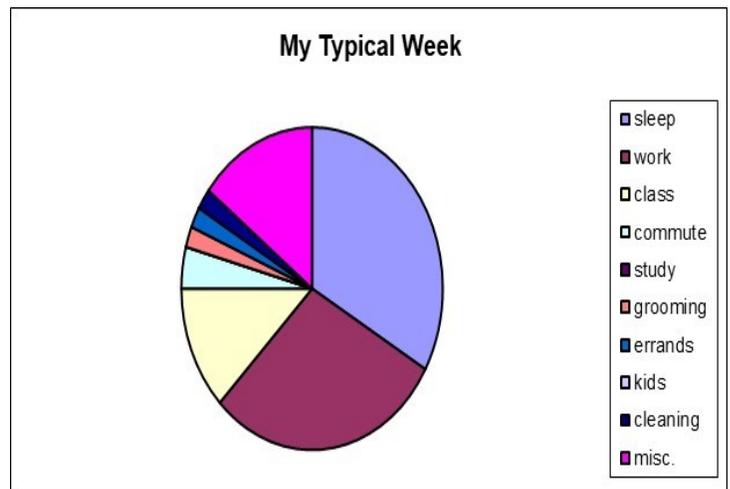
I did tire a bit of reading of yet another model-- a variant of the 4-D Cycle, this one referred to as the 4-I Cycle (Initiate... Inquire... Imagine... Innovate). I did appreciate discussion of the value of qualitative research in addition to the tradition of quantitative research, as well as the reinforcement of the contribution and potential of ethnography, which has interested me for years. Similarly, I found myself strongly drawn to learning more about "narrative methodology"-- research that elicits stories and accounts from participants, as well as "action research", since I have typically gravitated more to applied, rather than theoretical, research, due to its potential to enact more actionable change.

Whether you are already familiar with the concept of appreciative inquiry or exploring it for the first time, this book can help.

Personally Yours

How do you spend your time?

Each year, I take a sample of how I spend my time. It is a reminder to me to consider carefully how I spend such a finite, precious commodity. And, as the demands on my time have changed over the years, so has the resulting distribution. Here's my latest pie chart:



Think about how you spend YOUR time. Is it the way you intended?

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- Strategic facilitation of the planning process
- Board retreat facilitation

This newsletter is intended to provide useful information but should not be construed as legal or financial fact, advice, or opinion.

Coming in November...

- * **Project Selection and Criteria of Choice**
- * **Book discussion of Be the Hero: Three Powerful Ways to Overcome Challenges in Work and Life, by Noah Blumenthal, 2012, Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc.**
- * **And more!**



Have an idea or comment to share? Have a topic suggestion or planning question? Send it in! I would love to hear from you!

Be My Guest/Reader Feature

Have a planning success or horror story? Have some tips for others? I would love to feature you. If you are interested in being included in a future newsletter, let me know if you would like to write a guest column or be interviewed.

UPCOMING TRAINING & SPEAKING EVENTS

- * 11/12/18-11/13/18: Strategic Thinking, American Management Association, Chicago, IL, register at www.amanet.org.
- * 11/14/18-11/16/18: Strategy Execution, American Management Association, New York City, NY, register at www.amanet.org.
- * 11/26/18-11/28/18: Strategy Execution, American Management Association, Chicago, IL, register at www.amanet.org.
- * 12/02/18-12/03/18: Developing a Winning Business Plan, NeighborWorks® America, Pittsburg, PA, www.neighborworks.org.
- * 02/04/19-02/05/19: Strategic Thinking, American Management Association, Dallas, TX, register at www.amanet.org.
- * 02/07/19-02/08/19: Critical Thinking, American Management Association, Chicago, IL register at www.amanet.org.
- * 02/21/19-02/22/19: Strategic Thinking, American Management Association, Chicago, IL, register at www.amanet.org.

Email me for details!