

# Why use a Facilitator for your Strategic Planning Process?

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Have your plans to break through to a new level fallen flat? Are your margins shrinking? Or are you otherwise having trouble converting great ideas into reality for your mid-sized company? Is there a Divestiture on the horizon? One of the secrets to success with your strategic planning process is using a professional facilitator. Here are some reasons why:

1. **Experienced with Strategic Change Management.** It is easy to fall into the trap of complacency or even denial. A good facilitator is experienced with helping companies discover ideas and set plans to get past roadblocks into new levels of profitability and market share.
2. **Objective.** Even good companies can have self destructive habits. Use the facilitator to provide feedback on your team's strategic management skills, judgment, common sense, industry knowledge and your vision and ability to understand and tackle change.
3. **Independent.** The Facilitator is not married to your company's past and will provide an independent, go-forward perspective.
4. **A Track Record of Operating Success.** A good facilitator will have a strong operating background to draw from and be well informed with your industry.
5. **Fill in the Gaps.** The facilitator can help round out the management and strategic skills needed for an effective strategic planning process.
6. **Help you get all the Right People.** A good facilitator will make sure all the right players are involved in the process, including a full representation of your leaders and division managers, as well as representation from your board of directors.
7. **Reality Check.** The fresh perspective of a facilitator is like a reality check.
8. **Home Work.** The facilitator will make sure all the preparation is done, including the customer and employee survey process and a full functional review of all areas of your company and your industry and competitors.
9. **Root Causes.** Sometimes it may require a fresh look from an outside group to help you get to the bottom of negative trends such as flat or declining sales, shrinking margins or employee turnover.
10. **Focus & Execution.** A facilitator will ensure you assign specific responsibilities for each strategic priority; incorporate them into the bonus plan and review them quarterly.

*Brian Hamilton is the CEO of Corplan Advisors Inc, a Calgary-based firm dedicated to helping Owners and CEOs of mid-size companies in Western Canada cross the finish line smiling with their Divestitures, Acquisitions & Succession Plans.*