

3. Strategy

The third element is strategy. An objective remains a wish or a hope until there is a plan of action to achieve it. The design of the plan is important, particularly in circumstances where contingent factors play a role in determining whether the objective is achieved. Throughout the public sector, but perhaps more in international affairs than in other subject areas, the most that a program can aspire to do is contribute to a desired outcome. Hence, the importance of ensuring a logical connection between the objective and the strategy developed to achieve it.

4. Activities

The fourth element is clarity in respect of high payoff activities. In the pursuit of predetermined objectives, not all activities are of equal value -- some make a more direct contribution than others. As circumstances change and new objectives arise, organizations are constantly challenged to ensure that what they are doing corresponds to what they want to achieve. PMI is instructive in this respect. Having determined that international business development goals could best be achieved if the Trade Commissioner Service focused more on some kinds of activity than on others, the department negotiated a new division of labour with Industry Canada to allow trade officers abroad to perform a narrower range of services with a higher aggregate payoff.

In addition, it is important that the right amount of time be devoted to high payoff activities. This is always a challenge, but especially so when a change of direction requires acceptance of new attitudes and behaviours. Every organization has a "genetic code" of values, assumptions and beliefs which conditions the nature and range of its responses to particular situations -- and tends to resist change. Only determined leadership will see a transformation through to a successful conclusion.

5. Focus on results

The fifth element is a focus on results, the ultimate test of effectiveness. Results can be divided into two groups: (a) *outputs* which are the immediate product of effort and lie within the control of those involved in the activity, and (b) *outcomes* which are the consequences flowing from the outputs and can only be influenced by those involved. Given the context in which most political work is conducted, one in which many extraneous factors have an impact on results, focusing on the kinds of outputs most likely to have a beneficial effect on the outcomes desired is critical to the success of political work.