

and identify a plan for accomplishing those targets deemed of greatest worth.³ This **strategic planning** process is used in what Covey calls a "third generation" process.

How do you set goals?

First of all you need to identify what you expect to do and what you hope to accomplish in the short, medium and long term. The answer for Trade Commissioners and Assistants is easy. You are expected to offer the TCS's four Key Services, assist with accomplishment of the IBD Plan and achieve the key results as stated in your sector strategy.

Once you identify your goals and objectives, you then need to prioritize your tasks so that they support these goals/objectives. How do you decide which of the tasks on your to-do list are the most important? You have to prioritize.

2. Prioritization:

Every organization strives to provide clarity of purpose and a sense of direction. A common characteristic of effective and profitable organizations is the proper selection and prioritization of projects. A common characteristic of ineffective organizations is the lack of a prioritization process or the use of a process that is random.

In business today few of us have the luxury of working on a single deliverable at a time. We are constantly being battered by a deluge of conflicting priorities and shifting demands.

The clarity of purpose that organizations strive for is sometimes clouded by every project and initiative being labeled as "top priority." Everyone knows what "top priority" emergency work is. It's that problem that has to be fixed right now. Drop everything and attend to it, regardless of the cost and the impact on other activities. In a well-disciplined, highly evolved organization, unforeseen and real emergencies are few and far between. In organizations that are less evolved, it is more common to spend more time and resources on activities responding to crisis and urgent matters.

By characterizing everything as a high priority, managers and staff find themselves overloaded. They have more projects/tasks that "have to be done" than can be reasonably completed in the allocated amount of time and/or resources. This causes delayed delivery of projects that may be of great importance to the organization at the expense of projects that are of less importance.

A root cause for organizations not being able to select and prioritize projects effectively is the inability of their management and staff to establish a sound project selection and prioritization method.

Prioritization methods?

*Anything less than a conscious commitment to the Important
is an unconscious commitment to the unimportant*

Stephen R. Covey

When you have to choose among several tasks, there are several prioritization tools you can use. These tools are there to serve you, not the opposite. So use them with flexibility.

The rest of this section makes a brief introduction to concepts of time management suggested by Stephen R. Covey, author of many books, the most famous of which is *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*.

³ Covey. Ibid. p. 150.