



What to tell your HR and finance department

Q. What's the problem with strategic planning?

A: There has never been any formal training or specific guidelines for planning. So the newer planners find it really difficult to fulfil their role, resulting in inappropriate and inefficient output. This course is ideal to remedy that situation, unless of course you want to spend your evenings mentoring him/her.

Q: Why is the course so darned expensive?

A: It's not. A two-day course for secretaries costs R4 500. This is a six-day/five night course (that's not strictly true – you will get Thursday night off) which includes full board and lodging in addition to all instruction and materials. Furthermore, unlike the usual string of guest speakers who do it for exposure without stipulated deliverables, all facilitators and contributors on this course will be paid professional fees.

Q: Why is the course so darned cheap?

A: There are no fixed costs – it is run at a hotel and uses freelance experts at an hourly rate.

Q: Who are the guest speakers?

A: Don't push it - I don't know the top accountants or HR managers, so even if I told you, would it make a difference? Anyway, there are no 'guest speakers' – the trainers are leaders in their field and will be required to deliver.

Q: Who is running the course and can I trust them?

A: stratplanning.com is hosting the course. It is owned by Sid Peimer, who has an established reputation amongst blue chip brands and global agencies. He is personally liable for the outcome and is available to interview any prospective delegates if you are unsure of their suitability for the course.

Q: This course sounds a bit rough – will it affect the planner mentally?

A: Probably

Q: We can't afford to have the planner out of the agency for five days.

A: Then it's nice to know you're paying for the planner to be out the loop for a whole year.

Q: What am I going to get for my money?

A: In a nutshell, more revenue and more profit. Each of the six areas will contribute as follows:

1. Theoretical.

Delegates will have a deeper understanding of their role in the agency. Also, we are entering an era where agencies will need to charge for a wider range of services. This can only be accomplished if we know the clients' business. The planner is best positioned to provide that resource.

2. From data to information.

The majority of the planner's time is spent collecting data and then turning it into information. The camp will improve their efficiency, by teaching methods of finding secondary data as well as novel ways of soliciting primary data. However, in this module, emphasis will be placed on one of the most important (if not the most important) output of the planner – presentation construction. Planners will be taught various techniques to enable them to build an argument more effectively and lucidly. After all, presentations are the cash register of agencies – it is where the sale is 'rung up'.

3. Briefing.

The creative work is as good as the brief. Planners are required to take the client service brief and turn it into something inspiring for creatives. This demands not only knowledge of various briefing templates, but how to overcome the various constraints on this crucial activity in the value chain. The most voluminous output of strategic planners is the Communication Strategy. This will be dealt with in great detail.

4. Branding.

This is one of the most misused and misunderstood concepts in marketing. This module will investigate how to leverage the position of brand custodian, giving the planner more of a say in the allocation of communication resources. This module is essentially one of empowerment for the planner, giving them a greater presence, thereby increasing the perceived value of the service to the client.

5. Enhancing the role of the planner.

The planner's entire lifetime salary can be earned with a successful pitch. Sid Peimer will host this module. He is an experienced pitchmeister with a host of global agencies. He has also received intensive international training on this aspect of agency growth. Media strategy, being an allied strategic discipline, will also be covered.

6. Personal skills.

The vast majority of a planner's efficacy is dependent on their written and presentation skills. These two areas will receive uncompromising attention. It is also how stratplanning.com will be judged by the company that has sent the delegate, as it is the observable result.

Q: What if our planner pulls out halfway?

A: Tough.

Q: But we're not an ad agency

A: Nobody's perfect. However, this course will be no less powerful for planners in other disciplines.

Q: What about getting our money back from the training levy?

A: Not so fast. Contrary to popular opinion, you only get 50% rebate on the LEVY YOU HAVE PAID, not the training cost.