

Strategic Success Story: Burkhart Advertising

Internal business processes have to be at the optimum to compete in today's enterprise world. After all, if a company isn't making plans to better itself, then there's the certainty that its competitors are.

Naturally, staying ahead in terms of strategic planning is crucial, but how is this doable in a hyper-competitive sector?

A background on Burkhart

That was the challenge facing Burkhart Advertising Inc. The family-owned, Indiana-based business specialises in out-of-home advertising and signage services and has just passed its 50th birthday, having opened its doors in 1964. The company is split into two distinct divisions. Firstly, there's its on-premise sign division that creates, fabricates and installs signage as per customer needs. Secondly, there's the media division which covers the business's billboard interests. Ultimately, the latter entity is broken down into sales and marketing, operations and legislative affairs. Much of the company's customer base comes from regional customers - those that are based in and around the cities of South Bend and Fort Wayne.

Alongside the regional interest, Burkhart also deals with larger national and international organisations who typically engage with the company through their respective agencies. Ultimately, the demographic overlay of Burkhart's target market means there is a huge amount of competition. Put simply, the media dollar is highly sought-after. Consequently, in order to take on its rivals and ensure that the business constantly develops, an assessment of its strategy was needed.

Exterior influence, strategic innovation

The company wasn't starting from zero, but engaged consultant Robert Doshi of RBD Consulting, LLC in an effort to better understand what it would take to improve its strategy. Mr Doshi put together a shortlist of strategy software, the company voted, and StrategyBlocks came out on top. One of Burkhart's main issues centred on aligning the interests of the company's different departments. StrategyBlocks was found to be ideal in this regard.



Burkhart

After implementing StrategyBlocks, Burkhart set about identifying its key areas for improvement. Employee engagement was decided as the focus after an internal analysis of staff. While coming up with a headline goal is one thing, the most executable strategies break things down into a number of constituent parts.

For Burkhart, they are:

- Human resources and safety initiatives
- Sales and revenue targets
- Competition and position within the sector (As touched on, there are a lot of companies in the advertising space)
- Asset protection - tied back to the legislative department
- Asset management
- Process integration that explores areas of improvement

Ultimately, those six are important in their own right, but StrategyBlocks offers a simple way to visualise how they relate back to overarching goals.

Cutting out the noise, presenting the facts

Many businesses lose sight of their strategies too frequently, or don't have a succinct plan in the first place. In Burkhart's case, StrategyBlocks has opened up new avenues for collaborating on strategy and sharing ideas across the company.

” *I like to think we're a well intended, well informed company. But in the past, if we were asked for a detailed summary of the strategy behind what we were doing, we would have struggled to come up with anything succinct”*

— **Chris Pajakowski** *President of Burkhart's media division*

Built on layers or 'blocks', key strategic focus areas can be added with ownerships and associations as required to build a complete structure. By assigning ownership to individual activities, progress towards the end goal can be continuously monitored, updated and communicated at all levels.

On that note, at an individual level, accountability is now more black and white across Burkhart's operations. As more employees become aware of the company's overarching aims, they can match their performance against those wider goals.

” Using StrategyBlocks, whether it’s with an outside supplier or a colleague, there have been several occasions where I’ve been able to go through the strategy and within minutes they have an easy-to-understand snapshot of our strategic plan”

— Chris Pajakowski President of Burkhart’s media division

The bottom line

Ultimately, the need to have a formalised strategic plan will only become more apparent over time. As both the external and internal factors that affect the enterprise world become more complex, there’s a need to not only have high-level goals, but a path to achieve them as well.

Starting the strategy conversation doesn’t have to be laborious. In fact, with StrategyBlocks, it is a process that is easy to communicate across departments and throughout different teams. In the long-term, this results in more stakeholders having a clear idea of the company’s vision. In the case of Burkhart, the practice of doing so has had a big effect.

” Before StrategyBlocks, we didn’t have the ability to answer the question ‘what is your plan?’. We’d sit down and have fruitless conversations. Now, we have concrete answers when discussing our goals. That’s huge for us”

— Chris Pajakowski President of Burkhart’s media division

About StrategyBlocks

Get quality information

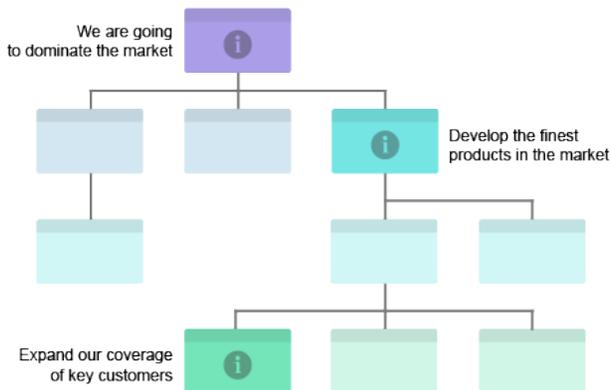
To be successful, a strategy must be supported by relevant information. Quantitative measures such as KPI’s have been the only visible means of monitoring execution. Although these are important, StrategyBlocks adds qualitative information. By providing the whole picture, StrategyBlocks makes meeting strategic goals more science than art.

How it works

In (figure 2) we are representing four levels of detail, but any number of levels are possible. Unlike strategy maps, every block in the diagram inherits its characteristics from the block above it, and the aggregated progress below it. There is clarity at all levels of a StrategyBlocks map, but the real power comes from what can be understood about the block itself.

What is a Block?

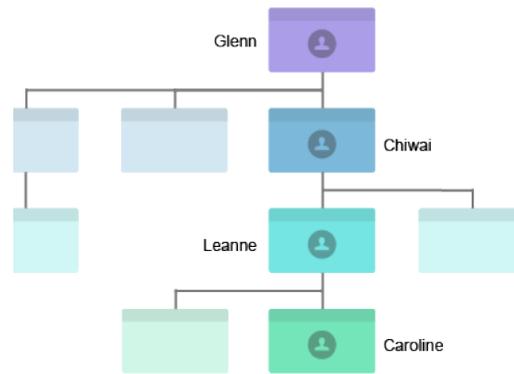
A Block describes exactly what needs to be achieved and who is responsible for it.



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Delegate Ownership & Responsibility

StrategyBlocks creates a clear linear path of responsibility.



StrategyBlocks is a complete, fully integrated software-as-a-service that allows for the consistent communication of ideas. It encourages participation at all levels, and guides participants towards the best use of their time and the organisation’s strategic goals. By recognising that successful strategic initiatives can emerge at any level within an organisation, StrategyBlocks can be easily tailored to fit the way your business is structured.

Moving forward

All companies should begin with a clear statement about Mission, Vision and Values. With this in place the company is ready for strategy formulation and goal setting. This is where StrategyBlocks can begin to provide the necessary visual clues. A strategy that can be visually disaggregated into blocks is a strategy that can be understood.

At this stage, the strategy has been formulated, and teams have been assigned to achieve each goal in the strategy. This is a critical junction. Assigning teams and gaining commitment is crucial to the success of the goal. This is a corporate priority and having the visual representation of goals is beneficial to achieve this. Finally, there comes the crucial stage of strategy execution. Goals must be linked to KPI’s, risks, financial plans and targets. Performance of team members must be constantly monitored. StrategyBlocks helps management visualize how each goal is proceeding.

Scorecards and strategy maps have value; they have been around for quite some time. But, clarity has value too, and we encourage companies to examine the components (and simplicity) of the StrategyBlocks approach to strategic execution, monitoring and communication.



StrategyBlocks

For more information on StrategyBlocks, please visit www.strategyblocks.com or email info@strategyblocks.com. If you would like an online demonstration please click the “Request an online demo” link from the website and we would be delighted to show you how StrategyBlocks can have a positive effect on your business.

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