

Association Hunger Games:

VICTORY OR DEFEAT?

Aaron Wolowiec, *MIM+E's* Meetings Coach, traveled to the ASAE Annual Meeting and Exposition this year. We asked him to share the presentation he gave there with us.

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IN THE MOVIE *The Hunger Games*, when Katniss and Peeta enter the arena, they face mutant animals, starvation, acid fog and fire.

In the Association Hunger Games, the pitfalls are different from those faced by Katniss and Peeta, but still potentially deadly to your meeting, or to your organization itself. During a session I presented at the ASAE Annual Meeting and Exposition in Nashville, I had the opportunity to address the challenges associations often face implementing strategy. They include lack of detailed planning and clear expectations, poor communication and prioritization, and lack of accountability.

According to a 2005 *Harvard Business Review* article, "Companies typically realize only about 60 percent of their strategy's potential value because of defects and breakdowns in planning and execution." (You can easily replace the word "companies" with any functional area or department within your organization. As a supplier, you might also think in terms of "sales" or "services.")

This execution gap suggests that what we plan to do usually doesn't align with what actually gets done. The resulting gap represents lost opportunities and revenue. To close this gap and conquer the challenges they face, I encourage organizations to SPICE (scan, plan, implement, communicate and evaluate) up their approach. This simple, non-linear framework for implementation planning and execution is most effective once a thoughtful strategic plan has been developed.

First, **scan** the terrain. Assess the strategic plan based upon recent performance. Then conduct a SWOT

analysis, and determine the issues that need to be addressed based upon findings.

Then it's time to **plan**. In the planning phase, be inquisitive and ask lots of questions. Select a tool to collect and maintain the responses to these questions. It could be a simple Excel spreadsheet or something more sophisticated, like Basecamp, a popular project-management platform.

When you're ready to **implement** the plan, first make sure leadership embraces it. Then schedule key checkpoints, invite input from your colleagues and be on the lookout for barriers. Be sure to help your colleagues prioritize and monitor the plan obsessively.

When you **communicate**, articulate specific actions needed and the outcomes desired. Check in frequently to answer questions, and ask your own questions about process, workflow and unexpected issues. Share progress, challenges and successes along the way.

Finally, don't forget to **evaluate**. Identify your organization's:

- Progress toward goals and metrics.
- Performance against the plan.
- Feedback from colleagues and stakeholders.
- Lessons learned for next time.

In narrowing your own organization's implementation gap, what changes can you make to ensure the odds are ever in your favor? 🍀



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Email your questions to Coach Aaron at aaron@eventgarde.com; please write "Meetings Mag" in the subject line.