



12 WAYS FOR

BUSINESS LEADERS



TO MAKE MORE PROACTIVE

DECISIONS

12 Ways For Business Leaders To Make More Proactive Decisions

As a business leader facing many choices each day, it's important to look ahead at risks that could hinder progress toward your strategic goals before making decisions.

Proactive leaders identify potential issues and solve them before they arise. This approach builds trust in the decision-making abilities of company leadership, which in turn helps a business gain the confidence of both employee and consumer.

To help you chart a sustainable path to success, we asked [Forbes Coaches Council](#) members for tips on how a business leader start to think more proactively and make smarter decisions. Read 12 of their best suggestions below.

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Forbes Coaches Council members offer tips to help business leaders be more proactive than reactive.

Photos courtesy of the individual members.

1. Create And Support A Vision

You can't foresee every eventuality. I use a three-step process with clients for proactive decision-making. First, create a vision of where you want to be.

Second, perform a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) analysis of your current situation. Third, choose three projects that will support your vision. Keep adjusting your process as time passes. In this way, you always base your decisions on where you want to get to rather than being reactionary. -

[Daphna Horowitz](#), [Daphna Horowitz Leadership](#)

2. Focus On The External Rate Of Change

Once the rate of external change is observed and understood, orient your internal processes, procedures and communication methods to ensure the alignment of organizational resources, personnel and effort. The organizational alignment will increase team engagement and will positively impact team performance. - [Dennis Volpe, LRI](#)

3. Engage In Scenario Planning

Scenario planning has been used for many years, but most organizations have not heard about it. It can be a very valuable tool if organizational leaders choose to take the time for it. It is used to make flexible, long-term plans and was a classic method used by military intelligence. There are different versions, but the more effective one I've seen is facilitated by human resource development professionals. - [Susan Madsen, Jon M. Huntsman School of Business](#)

4. Set A Big Ambitious Goal

Align your goals. Have a big ambitious goal (BAG) set eight to 10 years in the future. Set three-year and one-year milestones that move you toward your BAG. Quarterly strategic priorities, or QSPs, are then set on strategy days each quarter. They must align with the longer-term goals. Fidelity to long-term goals is the job of the owner. Then, work your QSPs relentlessly. Do at least one thing every day for each QSP. - [Sturdy McKee](#), [SturdyMcKee.com](#)

[Forbes Coaches Council](#) is an invitation-only community for leading business and career coaches.

5. Anticipate Your Future Needs

Anticipate your talent, organizational and customer needs based on current and upcoming events and trusted and transparent conversations, and then adjust accordingly. As a leader, you need to know what is happening outside of your organization, within the industry and with your competition. This will allow you to stay proactive while solving problems and finding innovative solutions. - [Izabela Lundberg](#), [Legacy Leaders Institute](#)

6. Don't Ignore The Little Problems

Look at the big-ticket items and the low-hanging fruit with equal excitement because what you ignore now will be an emergency later. Business leaders tend to focus their attention on regulator requirements or economic adjustment issues. Our nature is to play the numbers game to stay relevant and successful, but the little problems we bypass turn out to be the ones that cost the most. -

[Amera McCoy, McCoy Consulting LLC](#)

7. Be 'Heads-Up' Versus 'Heads-Down'

It's easy as a business leader to keep moving to what needs your attention most. I encourage my clients to schedule some "heads-up" time each week to ask the bigger questions. Scheduling this kind of time with your leadership team is important too. If you aren't proactive in setting time to be strategic, it's hard to be proactive in making strategic decisions. - [Kimberly Roush, All-Star Executive Coaching](#)

8. Capture Topics To Address At The Next Meeting

I recommend that my executive coaching clients add a standing agenda item at the beginning of every meeting to capture topics to address at the next meeting. This way, the entire group knows about upcoming priorities, and it gives them time to prepare to have more productive, efficient discussions. Also, this keeps the team's head in the game for the current meeting at hand. - [Karan Rhodes, Shockingly Different Leadership](#)

9. Create Think Tanks Within Your Company

Create think tanks with department heads or coaches that are open and honest. Spend time being intentional about areas of your business that may need your attention in the near future. Call out potential issues and solve them before they start. Include all levels in the solution. Ask questions, be open to hearing the answers and generate multiple options for matters on growth and possible concerns. - [Miranda VonFricken, Miranda VonFricken - Masterminds & Personal Growth Coaching!](#)

10. Include Influential Perspectives

Include the perspectives of those who can influence the decision. Participation is the key word here. Participation must be for the sake of the decision and not just for the sake of participation. In other words, make people more aware of who has to make which decisions and according to which principles the decision-making process is determined. Emphasize action and reflection. - [Cristian Hofmann](#), [Empowering Executives | SUPERGROUP LTD](#)

11. Make Planning Time Sacrosanct

One of the hardest things for busy leaders to do is make time for planning. One of the best practices great leaders employ is carving out and protecting time for themselves and their teams to plan and prioritize. Block, protect and use time in a routine fashion for planning and organizing work. - [Lisa Coleman](#), [Lisa Coleman Advisory Services, LLC](#)

12. Take An Agile Approach With Hard Limits

In uncertain and complex times of rapid change, long-term planning does not work. Agility is the key to achieving our vision and goals. To illustrate: In the case of a children's birthday party, which is a complex and uncertain scenario, detailed planning of all activities from 2 p.m. until 6 p.m. would not be very effective. Agile approaches with hard limits are exactly right at this time in order to guarantee safe-to-fail conditions. - [Michael Thiemann](#), [Strategy-Lab™](#)

A close-up photograph of a spiral-bound notebook. The notebook is open to a page with several large, handwritten letters in black ink. The letters are 'A', 'L', and 'A', with some additional strokes and dots around them. The spiral binding is visible on the left side of the page. The background is a light, neutral color.

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