Interview: Brent Gleeson

Introducing Brent Gleeson, co-chief-executive-officer of Internet Marketing Incorporated

Interviewer: We would appreciate your perspective regarding preparing for and undertaking a strategic audit to improve a company's performance. One of the first questions that come to mind is:

When an organization is preparing to undertake a strategic audit to enhance the company's performance, what do you recommend as the initial steps?

- B. Gleeson: When it comes to operations, you must consider the following:
 - Externally, what forces are affecting the business: This includes competition, market trends, changes in customer base, etc.
 - Current systems, processes, and policies: What's working and what isn't; every company, in growth made, will outgrow existing systems and processes multiple times throughout the lifecycle of the business.
 - Does the company have the right people in the right jobs: Redefining job responsibilities and potentially replacing team members with better talent more commensurate with the company's existing products, services, and clients
 - Review the company's existing strategic plan and make sure it is in line with the current vision (1 year, 3 year, 5 year, or 10+ year); does the organization currently have the capabilities and talent to fulfill this vision; if not, how does the organization ensure that it does invest in the proper resources?
 - How does the company currently measure *performance* both internally with employees and externally with clients and projects?

When it comes to sales, consider:

- What is the current sales plan and strategy and how does it need to be adjusted to fit the potentially revised operational or strategic plan?
- As the company audits internal systems and potentially develops new processes and even products and services, how will this be integrated into the sales plan?
- What is the analysis of competitor pricing models, products, and services?

Other things to analyze are:

- Existing resources and bandwidth
- Employee productivity, morale, career path desires, etc.
- Financial projections and forecasts: How does the strategic plan support the desired financial projections

Interviewer: How have you approached this in your current or prior organization(s)?

B. Gleeson: By performing the audit and putting new systems, processes, and policies in place where needed in order to properly support the revised strategic plan.

Interviewer: What do you find as the biggest challenge(s)? How have you overcome these?

- **B. Gleeson**: Identifying the root cause of internal inefficiencies (is it people, systems, technology, all of the above, some of the above, etc.). By performing a proper audit, doing 360 reviews, getting regular and transparent feedback from all team members, etc...that is how we get to the root cause and can then make the proper adjustments (that is, better software, firing/replacing people, and getting better systems in place).
- Interviewer: How do you guide the process to achieve the best possible results?
- **B. Gleeson**: Developing a plan, putting trusted stakeholders in place for various areas of responsibility, regular communication and follow up, and accountability processes.
- Interviewer: What advice do you have for companies when undertaking a strategic audit?
- B. Gleeson: Take your time and do it right. Use anonymous 360 reviews with questions designed to address what's currently working, what isn't, and what people feel would be the best solutions. Sometimes you will quickly find out that management may be the root cause of various issues!
- Interviewer: How have you ensured that the strategic audit leads to a plan that is executable and will achieve results?
- **B. Gleeson**: Auditing properly, collecting data, analyzing data, gaining insights that lead to actionable plans, developing the plan, executing, and following through.