

Planned Abandonment Exercise¹

The time to abandon a product, service, policy, rule, or other organizational element is much earlier than when it begins to cause problems. As a rule it is time to abandon when any of the three following conditions apply:

1. The product, service, market, process, or whatever "still has a few good years of life"
2. Its greatest virtue is that it is fully written off. Ask instead "what is it producing?"
3. An old and declining product, service, market, process, etc is being maintained at the expense of new and growing products, services, markets, processes, etc.

Step 1

Complete this worksheet using your best estimates (doing it with a group or leadership team works well).

1. List your organization's top products or services.
2. For each product/service, ask yourself, "if we didn't do this already, knowing what we now do, would we do it?"
3. Based on your answers to the preceding question, which products or services should be abandoned? Why? Pick dates to end those that will be abandoned.
4. What might replace them? List your ideas.

Step 2

Follow up by creating a worksheet related to each organizational element. (One worksheet per element). Ask a range of people to complete e.g. individuals or groups at each level of management and each function or business unit. You could also survey all employees.

Example elements to be examined (add others, delete those that aren't relevant to your organization)

Products, Services, Processes, Policies, Markets, Marketing Strategies, Distributors, Distribution Channels, Suppliers, Technologies, Partners.

¹ Adapted from: Drucker, P. and Senge, P. (2001). *Leading in a Time of Change*. Jossey-Bass

1. In the area you have selected, which of your organization's products, services, processes, markets, or whatever should be abandoned?
2. Why? Pick a date to end each.
3. What, if anything, might replace them?
4. List some other things that your organization is investing resources (time, money, energy) into that you think it should stop doing. Make a few notes about each and pick a date to end each.