

# Preparing for Success as the Economy Rebounds

## Focus on “Big Hitter” Projects with Cliff Consulting’s Strategic Initiatives Planning Workbook

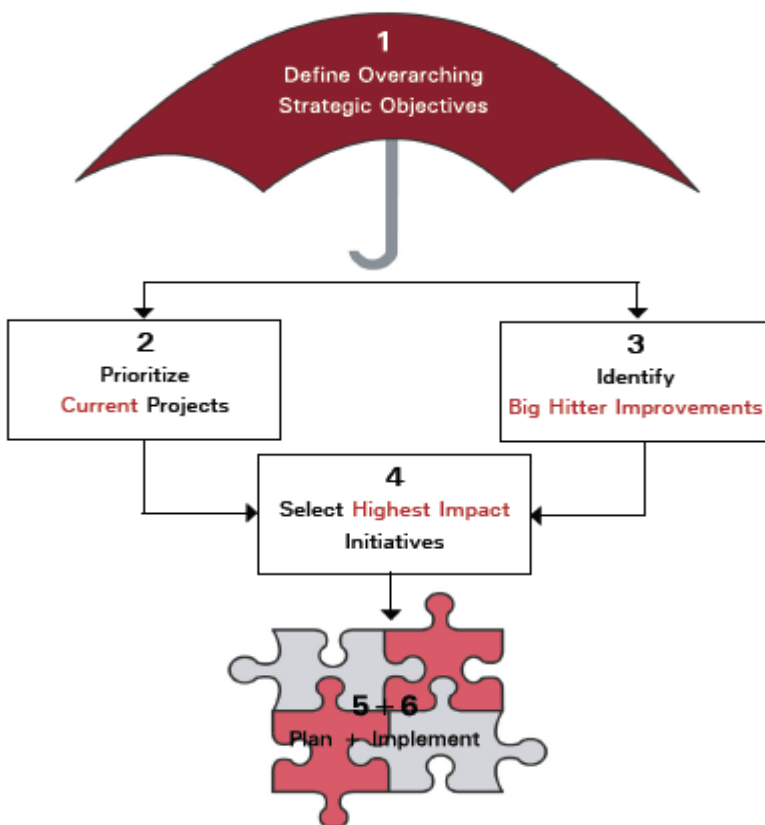
Businesses that cut expenses across the board while trying to ride out the recession are not nearly as likely to thrive after a recession as those who balance cost saving measures with carefully planned investments, according to a recent study detailed in the March 2010 Harvard Business Review (“Roaring Out of Recession”).

These findings make a lot of sense to us...but in our experience, striking that balance is very tough, and we wanted to do our part to help. Our Strategic Initiatives Planning Workbook is designed to guide businesses of all sizes in identifying the short list of projects that will help them rebound and thrive post-recession.

What sets this approach apart is that it directs organizations to look at both cost-cutting and growth initiatives through a single set of clear, measurable objectives, and assists them in focusing their efforts on the few most important initiatives that will really matter. While everyone else is running ragged trying to “do more with less,” we want to help companies find ways to just DO LESS, but do it extremely well.

The workbook involves 6 key steps:

### Overview of Strategic Initiatives Planning Process



STEP 1: **Define Strategic Objectives** for the next few years that are achievable and measurable

STEP 2: **Prioritize Current Investment Projects** against those objectives, and have the courage to cancel those that won’t make a significant impact

STEP 3: **Identify Big Hitter Operational Improvements**, focusing on the few that will have significant tangible results in a year or less

STEP 4: **Select the Highest Impact Initiatives** between these two lists so you can focus your resources on just a small set of projects that will make the biggest difference

STEPS 5 & 6: **Plan and Implement Projects successfully by involving the right people and carefully** considering where, how and when to get going.

CCI offers the Strategic Initiatives Planning Workbook free of charge, and also offers cost-effective Project Prioritization and Operational Assessment services to help those organizations that don’t want to go it alone. For more information and a copy of the workbook, visit [www.CliffConsulting.net](http://www.CliffConsulting.net), or give us a call at 510-530-7751.

## Cliff Consulting's Strategic Initiatives Planning Workbook Case Studies

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### ❑ **In the Midst of a Major Product Launch, a National Health Insurance Company...**

...was able to focus its technical, business, and vendor resources on the short list of initiatives that would be most critical to the viability of its newest product using a strategy-based prioritization process. With CCI's help, our client's key stakeholders were able to align on the relative priority and timing of more than 270 technology requests, enabling key resources to focus on planning for their 15 most critical initiatives while keeping all "eyes on the ball" for their upcoming product release. Their strategic drivers included:

1. Stabilize the new product during the first few months of use by its initial customers
2. Add critical features required to successfully sell the product within 6 months
3. Meet all current and upcoming compliance obligations by their due dates

The result was a successful product launch and a well-planned series of releases over the course of the following year.

### ❑ **In Response to Exponential Cost Escalation, a Large Builder in California...**

...was able to clarify and prioritize dozens of operational improvement ideas and projects-in-flight down to the top 12 initiatives most likely to support their three strategic near term objectives:

1. Drive down raw materials costs from suppliers
2. Improve vendor relationships in order to get the best possible rates and the highest quality resources
3. Reduce unplanned expenditures through better coordination across decision-makers and more proactive oversight

The result was a short list of strategic initiatives for the coming year plus a completely new way of prioritizing initiatives which was incorporated into the executive goal-setting cycle for the following year.

### ❑ **After Considerable Downsizing, a Large Philanthropic Foundation improved Efficiency and Internal Communications...**

...through a major operational improvement initiative geared toward:

1. Improving the quality and timeliness of grants management information,
2. Reducing re-work and redundant data entry for its over-stretched remaining staff, and
3. Improving communications and collaboration across the Foundation.

This effort started with brainstorming dozens of ideas for operational improvements and new technologies, which were then evaluated by a cross-Foundation committee comprised of program, administrative, and technology representatives. They identified those initiatives most likely to bring substantial change within a reasonable cost and timeframe. The Foundation then agreed on a prioritized road map of improvement initiatives, and then re-sequenced and prioritized existing plans for systems upgrades and new technology in order to get maximum value from their technology purchases. The results led to a variety of improvements including automation of key reports, more reliable data, elimination of redundant and time consuming spreadsheets, and improved communications and decision-making.