

Have You Mourned the Death of a Great Idea?

Author: Kriss Barlow, RN, MBA,



Time and again, the weapon used to kill many of healthcare's best ideas is internal process and politics.

The scenario: A creative, dedicated healthcare professional earnestly sets out to sell others on the value of the idea, and then build the process for approval and implementation. But as the steward of the idea begins to explain what it will take, the process suddenly becomes exhausting... A skeptical audience begins squeezing the last breaths out of the idea by offering comments like, "Great idea, but it's not feasible with our limited resources"...Or, "We just can't make it happen without the support of IT."

The steward hears more comments: "It's not in the budget for this year", or the turf-battle favorite, "That whole initiative is being driven by the COO, not business development."

But somehow, if it's a good idea, there ought to be a way to demonstrate what it can do for the organization—and rescue it from extinction. If the idea is solid, then the steward needs to find allies and develop a new approach to give it a chance.

3 Steps to Advancing Your Idea

While you may have a great idea, often you need help to "put the wheels on it." First, you need someone willing to be the internal champion—the person whose role it is to make sure it really is a good idea. The champion serves to check out the dollars and other resources, consider the outcomes, feasibility and potential problems, and then establish an implementation work plan.

Second, it's crucial to know the numbers: to determine the costs and returns before you ever consider implementing the idea. It's a basic idea, but one that many organizations don't pay nearly enough attention to at the start.

Third, you need to build a strong strategy for communication. This goes beyond just providing verbal updates at department meetings. It requires regular updates—written *down* when necessary—to all the members of the team. Try it and see: This goes a long way in keeping your implementation plan moving forward and according to schedule.

Developing the Approach

Take advantage of others' expertise, both within the health system and on the outside, and ask them to provide recommendations for what the plan needs to accomplish, who needs to be involved, who or what is a perceived internal barrier, and what the timeline should be for implementing the process. Following this idea-based work plan can be a helpful approach. As you establish your plan, make sure to:

- Determine the "hot spots" for development and implementation.
- Ensure that the roles and responsibilities of each team member are clear at the onset.
- Manage turf issues up front.

- Work with the visionaries on your team to learn more about how to bring ideas to fruition within your organization's culture.
- Avoid circular development—otherwise known as “going around in circles.”

The Basics of a Good Work Plan

- Keep it simple. Remember: The plan is not the end result; it's a tool to keep you focused.
- Distribute the plan to all potential political pot-stirrers at the onset.
- Use a marketing implementation grid to frame your work plan.
- Delineate the tactics; include names, dates and outcomes.
- Don't mistake enthusiasm for the idea with a desire to drop everything and get it done, have a timeline.
- Detail outcomes for the CEO.
- Build in reality checks—places where you can get out if you need to.
- Talk less, do more.

At a time when organizations are working hard to create more synergy among their staff and refocusing on the customer, the door is open wider than ever to find new ways to enhance your service perceptions and capabilities.

Don't let internal politics—like a lukewarm reception, or unrealistic excuses—prevent you from moving your organization forward. Look and listen for new ideas and new innovations from your leadership team, and get the process moving!



Kriss Barlow, Corporate Health Group,
www.corporatehealthgroup.com, 1-888-334-2500