



CORPORATE PLANNING IN GOVERNMENT ORGANISATIONS IN NIGERIA: A PERSONAL EXPERIENCE AND LESSONS LEARNT

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Abstract: The paper shares some practical experiences in the art and science of conducting Corporate Planning in government organizations and exhorts Heads of Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) to adopt Corporate Planning as the sustainable basis for repositioning their organizations' to better discharge their mandate and deliver public services that meet the needs and expectations of the citizenry consistently and economically. To facilitate its adoption, the paper articulates tips in the major areas of guidelines for conducting Corporate Planning, common mistakes or misconceptions on Corporate Planning, reporting format for Corporate Planning, reasons why Heads of MDAs are unwilling to commission Corporate Planning and best practices that will guarantee successful conduct of Corporate Planning exercise and recommendation of implementable measures and strategies in government organizations.

Keywords: Corporate Plan Document, Guidelines for Conducting Corporate Planning, Key Performance Indicators, Mandate and Organization Structure Fit for Purpose

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Corporate Planning has been viewed from many perspectives. According to Moorthy (2013) Corporate Planning is used to see whether or not the organization's assets and resources are being employed in the best possible manner. To Davis (2013) Corporate Planning as a formal and structured approach can be instrumental in achieving strategic corporate goals and objectives.

It focuses on efficiently and effectively achieving optimal performance from all departments, with actionable information provided to executive management in order to foster accountability and organizational growth. From the perspective of Gilana (2013), the success of an organization is typically attributed to effective Corporate Planning. According to the author, Corporate Planning details the scope of the organization, defines organization goals, establishes roles and job responsibilities, draws up detailed plans to achieve those goals, allocates resources and oversees operations. The author concluded that it is a structured approach aimed at ensuring that an organization meets its objectives. The general outputs of an effective Corporate Planning flowing from the above definitions will include clarified mandates for government organizations, vision and mission statements, core values, key result areas, long term goals, medium term objectives and strategies, core functions and accompanying activities, defined responsibilities for departments/divisions/sections/units, key performance indicators, outputs and outcomes of functions, organization structure fit for purpose, reengineered processes, establishment plan that addresses training needs and capacity enhancement, job description that sets out the tasks of each post, better equipped staff that are aware of the goals and objectives of their MDA and the requirements of their own job and functional service standards and service charters.

The overriding objective of this presentation is to demonstrate that Corporate Planning is relevant and applicable to government organizations at all levels and to exhort Heads of government organizations to embrace and use it to reposition their organizations to better discharge their mandates and assist government in delivering public services that meet the needs and expectations of the citizenry consistently and economically.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 OVERVIEW OF CORPORATE PLANNING AND CORPORATE PLAN DEVELOPMENT

In the Nigerian public sector in particular, Corporate Planning can be seen as a process in which Government Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDA) analyze their objectives, priorities, development strategies and environment in the light of assigned mandate, and determines how to organize and apply their resources (human, financial etc.) to most efficiently and effectively achieving their objectives and meeting service delivery standards and targets. Corporate Planning according to Wheeler (2011) should enable an MDA to better determine and understand:

- **Why** it exists – its mandate
- **What** is it meant to be doing – its goals and objectives
- **How** it can best organize itself to deliver on its objectives – its functions, structure, establishment etc.
- **Who** it needs to fit the structure and deliver the service – its workforce or staff

Corporate Planning is a review and re-organization process usually carried out in response to some sort of change. Such a change according to Wheeler (2011) could be:

- A changing environment – political, economic or financial resulting in a changed level of public funds available,
- New policy commitment to reform seeking better performance,
- New technologies which radically affect the way work is done, e.g. ICT,
- New mandates, priorities or services required,
- Aging workforce, redundant skills or other HR constraint,
- New social/cultural norms e.g. public expectation, gender, etc.

There is no denying the fact that these change scenarios have characterized government organizations at all levels of governance in Nigeria presently. The imperatives for adoption of Corporate Planning as a basis for managing government organizations are clear and urgent: reduced public funds and sustained social and political pressure to radically reduce the cost of governance, the commitment of government to reform aimed at better performance of public institutions and public servants. The 4-point agenda of the current Enugu state administration emphasizes Service and Accountability- “the public service must provide services to the people of the state; and every public servant, including political office holders must be accountable to the people for the services for which he has been employed to render”. Indeed there is global clamour for good governance in both public and private institutions. All these call for a leaner, more efficient government that is focused on developing the right policies, adopting the appropriate strategies for delivering services to the people and getting value for all public expenditure

The above change situations have outlined when Corporate Planning exercise should be embarked upon in an MDA. Whenever an MDA or some MDAs are confronting some or all the change situations identified above, then Corporate Planning is needed to objectively address the situation. The recent federal government exercise that reviewed the mandates of all government agencies with a view to restructuring and rationalizing them has started the process: the next logical step should be to go the whole hog and produce a Corporate Planning document for the ones that have survived. This will ensure that all priority government policies, programmes, plans and projects are clearly assigned and resourced to the appropriate agency/agencies for execution in the short to medium terms. Corporate Planning is generally accepted as an enduring basis for strengthening and sharpening the focus of the public service for a more effective and efficient service delivery and support of government policy making and plans, programmes and project management.

A Corporate Planning exercise can seem complex and time consuming but, if well done, its benefits can justify the effort. Some of the major benefits are:

According to Gilana (2013) it reduces uncertainty by anticipating risks, allocates resources efficiently, reduces ambiguity (by defining organizational units, key functions of the organization, establishes clear boundaries and decision making frameworks, clarifies opportunities and threats, determines cost effective methods, provides a well-defined vision for the future, confirms the values of the organization and fosters an organized outline for decision making. More importantly it helps in measuring success by setting time defined objectives and clear monitoring systems.

From Moorty's (2013) perspective Corporate Planning enables the organization to understand the environments in which it is presently operating, helps the organization to achieve its vision and mission faster, motivates employees into being more productive and produces at cheaper rates or produces more at the same rates. Generally the organization is able to integrate and correlate all its strategic functions and lets all the departments know what is expected of them.

Specifically for government organizations Wheeler (2011) noted that the benefits that can accrue include:

- An MDA that is demonstrably “fit for purpose” in that its structure and workforce organization is able to fulfill the MDA's mandate.
- An MDA that is operationally efficient in which all established positions are justified and responsive. Over-manning and imbalances between cadres is eradicated providing expenditure savings.
- There is an Establishment Plan that addresses training needs and capacity enhancement. Each post has a job description that sets out the tasks of the post.
- Staff of the MDA is aware of the goals and objectives of their MDA and the requirements of their own job. They are better equipped to provide service to the public.
- The Corporate Plan leads to other tools to enhance performance such as service standards and service charters.

A Corporate Plan is basically derived from the recommendations of Corporate Planning document. It majorly captures in a graphic form the strategic goals and strategies for their realization in an action plan and implementation strategy document. It also contains an operating budget, plans for monitoring and evaluating the action plan and measures for communicating the Corporate Plan. It is normally for a period not exceeding five years.

2.2 Corporate Planning Processes/Guidelines

Literature on Corporate Planning processes will dwell on the technical steps important in starting and producing the report. This will not be helpful to the uninitiated consultant or average reader. A good understanding of Corporate Planning in MDAs will require an appreciation of all the different stages it will pass, before, during and after the exercise.

There are thus three stages in Corporate Planning development. These are pre-Corporate Planning, Corporate Planning and post Corporate Planning stages. In the pre Corporate Planning stage, the need for the exercise is established-internally or externally. The Council/Board, Management/Unions or Individual Officers can observe the need for the exercise and make conscious efforts to mobilize support, buy in and approval for it. At this stage also the decision to use outside consultants, in-house experts and/or a combination of the two will be made. At this point, it will not be very helpful delving into the merits or otherwise of the three options. This will be touched on later.

Alternatively, independent consultants can submit proposals to the management of the MDA on the need for the commissioning of a Corporate Planning exercise after it must have done some diagnostic studies or in its quest for business. The initiative can also come from development partners as a form of technical intervention/targeted assistance or government in its quest for reform or improved performance of its organisations.

Whether internally or externally driven, resources will not be committed into Corporate Planning exercise if there is no manifest need for it and clear benefits to be derived by the MDA and /or its core stakeholders(citizenry mostly). Whatever reservations one may have on the motive or otherwise of development partners, the point must be made that Corporate Planning is a veritable tool for strengthening and repositioning MDAs to better discharge their mandate.

This stage is as important as it is difficult. Even when the need is evident and the motive altruistic, there will always be resistance for reasons to be explored in another section of this paper.

Success in securing approving authority buy in, acceptance and support in conducting Corporate Planning in an MDA will depend on the persuasiveness (easier when it is evidence based)of the promoters of the idea and the professionalism demonstrated by consultants during the exercise.

During actual Corporate Planning stage, some processes or guidelines should be followed in achieving the objectives of the exercise and derive the benefits of the process. There are many variants of guidelines on Corporate Planning. Generally, the corporate /strategic planning process consists of five interrelated stages (Andrews, 1987):

- Forming a strategic vision and mission of what the organization's future business/service make-up will be and where the organization is headed – so as to provide long-term direction, delineate what kind of enterprise the company is trying to become, and infuse the organization with a sense of purposeful action.
- Setting objective – converting the strategic vision into specific performance outcomes for the organization to achieve.
- Crafting a strategy to achieve the desired outcomes.
- Implementing and executing the chosen strategy efficiently and effectively.

- Evaluating performance and initiating corrective adjustments in vision, long-term direction, objectives, strategy, or implementation in light of actual experience, changing conditions, new ideas, and new opportunities.

This author has used and found the one developed by Wheeler (2011) to be very comprehensive and comprehensible. He once described it as an idiotic guide-implying that it is so simple that the average person can read and apply it independently.

In the guidelines, Corporate Planning was broken into five sequential steps as shown below:

- ***Establishing the Plan Context:*** identifying, reviewing and redefining the MDA's mandates, vision and mission statement, long term goals, medium term objectives and its medium term plan;
- ***Institutional Appraisal:*** measuring and analyzing the MDA's ability to fulfill its aspirations (Context) through functional, process and structural reviews:
- ***Proposals:*** the proposed revised/amended structure and organization (arising from findings of the Institutional Appraisal (MDAs);
- ***Establishment plan:*** identification of human resource needs to implement proposed structure, job analysis and descriptions, a workforce plan and training needs assessment and proposed programme; and
- ***Implementation:*** implementation action plan and timetable.

For step one, the activities are:

- Review the history and current situation of the MDA
- Clarify the mandate of the MDA
- Craft the vision and mission statements of the MDA
- Establish the core values of the MDA
- Articulate the key result areas of the MDA

For step two of the Corporate Planning process, the outputs will include the following:

- Define long term goals of the MDA
- State the strategic objectives arising from the long term goals
- State the outputs from the strategic objectives
- Articulate the strategies to be used in realizing the long term goals

Under step three, the following outputs will emerge:

❖ Functional review

The functional review can be broken down into a number of steps. These are summarized below:

- Identify a total list of current functions in the organisation. These should be presented by department and classified
- Identify resource usage, cost and work volumes of current functions;

- Look at performance issues. Analyse how well the functions are being carried out, including internal functions and the M&E of service delivery. Performance can be measured against a standard measure, for example 1 to 5 where 1 is “good” and 5 is “failed/not at all”. It is good to involve all stakeholders in this exercise either through workshops, interviews or by conducting SWOT type exercises;
- Relate the functions to the current medium term objectives, is there clarity over what the function is attempting to achieve;
- Identify which functions:
 - are still relevant and of high priority,
 - need clarification or redefinition
 - are not of high priority or could be dropped,
 - could be privatized or given to someone else,
 - should be added if the MDA is to fulfill its mandate.
- ❖ Key process review
- ❖ Structural review
- ❖ Re- align functions with new structure
- ❖ Set new departmental objectives/schedules

In step four, the following will emerge:

- Establishment plan
- Job analysis
- Job description

Under step five, the following will be done:

- Develop workforce plan
- Recruit objectively established competent staff
- Identify the training needs of officers
- Set individual and emerged departmental performance targets based on job descriptions for officers and assigned responsibilities for departments.

3.1 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This engagement approach adopted in preparing this report is based on and draws from the experiences of the writer as an active participant in conducting Corporate Planning for various government organizations in Nigeria. Under the

sponsorship of Department For International Development (DFID) funded State Partnership for Accountability, Responsiveness and Capability (SPARC) and working with some national and international consultants, this author directly participated in conducting Corporate Planning for the following government organizations: Enugu State Civil Service Commission (ESCSC) (2010), Enugu State Economic Planning Commission (ESEPC) (2011) and Enugu State Office of Head of Service (OHoS) (2012). The author also participated in developing a Corporate Planning report and Corporate Plan document for Centre for Management Development (CMD), (2000) and for ESEPC respectively. The author has also had the experience of drafting an Executive Memo for the approval of Enugu State Government for the implementation of the recommendations of the Corporate Planning report for ESCSC.

These varied experiences have placed the author in a good stead to share some lessons learnt in the art and science of conducting and reporting on Corporate Planning and Corporate Plan Development. The learned lessons to be shared are majorly in the areas of Corporate Planning processes/guidelines for conducting a Corporate Planning exercise, common mistakes or misconceptions on Corporate Planning for government organizations, reporting format for Corporate Planning and Corporate Plan documents, reasons why heads of MDAs are unwilling to commission Corporate Planning and the best practices that will guarantee successful conduct of Corporate Planning exercise and articulation of recommendations that are implementable.

4.0 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Why Many MDAs are Unwilling to Conduct Corporate Planning

Given the many benefits of Corporate Planning, one would have expected all MDAs to have done, and be reviewing it consistently. But the situation in the six states that SPARC is operating in showed that it was not in existence; hence it was adopted as one of the major areas of its intervention. The situation is not different at the federal level. The question that arises is why are MDAs not having Corporate Plans in spite of its promises? The following are possible explanations:

4.1.1 Ignorance

Many Heads of MDAs are either unaware of the benefits of Corporate Planning or believe that it is only relevant or applicable to big private enterprises. In the SPARC intervention state (Enugu) where the exercise was completed at no cost to the MDAs as it was fully funded, only three out of the over thirty MDAs that qualified for the intervention accepted to subject their organizations to Corporate Planning exercise. The others genuinely believed that it will not add any value to their operations. Some were skeptical and not really sure that it will benefit them as individuals. They more efforts were made to educate and persuade the heads of the MDAs to approve the conduct of Corporate Planning in their organizations, the more resistant and suspicious they became.

4.1.2 Funding

The cost of conducting the whole process of Corporate Planning in an MDA can be high. The conservative estimate of paying three consultants working for 30 days as per SPARC standards is at least three million naira. When added to logistics and the cost of holding workshops, and printing reports, the total gets up to 5million naira. Inadequately funded MDAs will be hard pressed funding Corporate Planning exercises.

4.1.3 Capacity

Corporate Planning is a mentally demanding rigorous exercise. Crafting mission and vision statements, core values, policy priorities, long term strategies, establishment plan etc. are by no means simple and routine exercises. It comes to reason that many MDAs may indeed want to do a Corporate Plan but will not have the capacity to do it well.

4.1.4 Fear

The outputs and outcomes of Corporate Planning are largely unpredictable. While employers fear that it may lead to expanded structures and manpower requirements, employees believe that it will almost always lead to leaner structures and accompanying downsizing. These fears are real but not always the way and manner anticipated. Not being sure of the full implications of the outputs and outcomes of Corporate Planning, many heads of MDAs are playing safe. Their attitude seems to be “let me not start what I cannot end or control the outcome”.

4.2 Corporate Planning Reporting Format

Two reports are normally produced at the end of a Corporate Planning exercise. These include Corporate Planning report and Corporate Plan report. Corporate Plan report derives from Corporate Planning report. Corporate Planning report details the processes for conducting a Corporate Planning exercise, including detailed explanations of how vision and mission statements and core values were crafted, how mandate was clarified, methodology for determining long term goals, medium term objectives and strategies and conduct of functional, process and structural reviews. Corporate Plan report on the other hand essentially articulates the strategic goals and objectives of the MDA and outlines an action plan for their realization. The outline of Corporate planning report, depending on the authority it is being submitted to will include the following:

- Title Page
- Acronyms and Abbreviations
- Acknowledgements
- Executive Summary
- Background and Introduction
- Outline of Assignment, Methodology Adopted and Outputs
- Recommended Mandates
- Crafted Vision, Mission and Core Values
- Key SWOT Factors Identified
- Long Term Goals, Medium Term Objectives and Strategies
- Performance Review of Existing Functions
- Recommendations on Organizational Structure
- Recommendations on the Functional and Structural Reviews
- Lessons Learnt
- Next Steps

- References
- Annexures (terms of reference (tor), instruments used in eliciting data etc.)

This Corporate Planning outline is not cast in stone. It is only a comprehensive one that can be adapted to suit reporting needs.

For a Corporate Plan, the outline is slightly different. A comprehensive outline will include:

- Foreword
- Contents
- Abbreviations and Acronyms
- Executive Summary
- Brief Overview of organization
- Description of Major Programmes and Services
- Challenges
- Achievements
- Organizational Structure
- Vision Statement
- Mission Statement
- Core Values
- Mandate
- Core functions
- Key result areas
- Strategic Analysis Data-SWOT
- Strategic goals
- Strategic objectives
- Action plan and implementation strategy for realizing strategic goals
- Operating budget
- Monitoring and evaluation of plan
- Communicating the Corporate Plan

4.3 Common Mistakes in Conducting Corporate Planning

The common misconceptions and mistakes in Corporate Planning amongst MDAs include:

- The belief that Corporate Planning is only critically relevant to organized private enterprises and offers little applicability to MDAs and public enterprises. As can be seen from the benefits of Corporate Planning, it has practical relevance and offers an enduring platform for enhanced

performance and discharge of the mandates of MDAs. Any meaningful reform of the public/civil service should have Corporate Planning as an integral component.

- A Corporate Plan can be imported and/or adopted wholesale. It is not a strategy document that can be copied. For it to work and deliver on its promises it must be painstakingly initiated and developed on an individual MDA basis from beginning to the end.
- External consultants can craft a Corporate Plan document without working with the operators of the MDA and expect it to work. Technical skills and knowledge though important will need to relate with inside knowledge and experience to produce Corporate Planning recommendations that are implementable.
- Knowledgeable MDA officers can base on their technical competence and professional expertise develops their own Corporate Plan document. This is conceivable but professionally ill-advised. Objectivity is a major criterion that will guarantee the integrity and workability of Corporate Plan recommendations. Officers with vested interests and biases cannot be trusted to be reasonably objective in crafting a Corporate Plan.
- The recommendations of Corporate Planning will almost always be against the interests of staff, MDAs and government. Nothing can be further from the truth. Indeed all the Corporate Planning so far concluded for Enugu state government have all recommended massive retooling of the service, employment of additional qualified officers and capacity building initiatives for extant officers.

4.4 Best Practices in Conducting Corporate Planning in MDAs

Top management of the MDA must accept the need for Corporate Planning exercise and commit resources towards its implementation. More importantly, it must also commit to full implementation of the outputs and outcomes of the exercise. Active participation of top management, without being overbearing, is needed in seeing to the timely completion and involvement of all staff in conducting the exercise.

A balanced team of consultants is needed in driving and facilitating Corporate Planning in MDAs. At the operational level, the MDA will have to set up a Corporate Planning working group (CPWG) internally. All types and levels of officers sufficiently knowledgeable and experienced will be represented in this group. Bearing in mind the fact that Corporate Planning embraces, and the outputs will likely affect, all departments/divisions/sections/units of the MDA then it becomes imperative that all levels of middle to senior officers and all departments be adequately involved in the exercise. The working group in liaison with consultants or working independently will do all the technical work-producing the initial documents that will be presented to staff for their inputs and to management ultimately for endorsement.

A technical team of consultants will be required in driving the Corporate Planning exercise to its logical conclusion. Clearly for reasons of objectivity, outside consultants are needed in carrying out Corporate Planning in MDAs. Even where individual officers of the MDA are professionally competent and technically able to drive the exercise, it is advisable to employ the services of outside consultants who will work with the knowledgeable members of the working group in delivering the Corporate Plan document. The composition of the consulting team is equally important. Using only private sector or academic consultants are not advised. So also is using only public/civil

servants' ill advised. A balanced team will comprise about three consultants with public/civil service and private sector cum academic backgrounds.

A series of workshops and consultations will be needed in Corporate Planning in MDAs. The initial interaction with top management will lead to the acceptance of the need for and benefits of the exercise and the proposed engagement approach and methodology. A sensitization workshop is needed to apprise all officers of the MDA of the need for the exercise, its benefits, their roles and responsibilities of the consultants, CPWG and management. The various instruments to be used in the exercise will also be discussed.

A minimum of three technical workshops will be required for the clarification of mandates, functional, process, structural reviews and validation of recommendations and consideration of draft report.

In all of the interactions, the environment that will promote and sustain open and frank deliberations should be consciously established. Participants and all stakeholders should be encouraged to speak out clearly without fear of recriminations to avoid efforts at sabotaging and undermining the Corporate Plan after it has been developed. While it will be naïve to expect 100% adoption of the Corporate Plan, it is important to have a critical mass of senior officers, especially those occupying strategic positions supporting it.

It should be noted that the implementability of the Corporate Plan will not depend on the beauty of the report turned in by the consultants. It depends on and will require that the core recommendations be implementable. Given that officers and management of the MDAs will be responsible for the implementation of the recommendations, it is imperative that they be carried along in drawing out the recommendations. The CPWG is critical in ensuring that this happens. Consultants should not act as "the know all doctor"; they are to facilitate the process that will produce recommendations that will seem to, and actually work if and when implemented.

Corporate Planning is an iterative process. It demands the consultants working with the CPWG to generate positions/documents that will require being presented, discussed and agreed in departments/divisions/sections/units or even in a management meeting, validated and revalidated before it is concluded. It is time consuming. Based on experience Corporate Planning cannot be started and completed within one week in an MDA. Care should also be taken in not extending it too far. As circumstances change the position of the MDA can also change even on basic things like its core values, policy priorities and strategies. Efforts should be made by all concerned to initiate and complete the exercise within one month.

Full costing and adequate resourcing of recommended strategies are needed for successfully implementing the recommendations contained in the Corporate Plan document.

5.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

Corporate planning is a management tool that can help MDAs to perform better. It disciplines them to focus on the functions that address their mandate. It assists them in deploying their principal resources to functions and activities that define the social and economic justification for their existence. It determines what should be done, why it should be done, who will do it, the resources needed to accomplish it, the timeline for its accomplishment and the milestones and performance indicators critical in monitoring and ensuring that planned activities are carried out as at when due.

It sustains not just the performance of tasks but ensures that expected outputs and outcomes and indeed impacts of tasks are realized.

5.2 Recommendations

The many factors and forces militating against the development of corporate planning in MDAs are noted. There can be no excuse however, for not having a Corporate Plan in place in MDAs particularly if we want them to be delivering on their mandate, effectively, efficiently and economically. The challenge is to encourage and challenge MDAs not just to conduct corporate planning but to have it reviewed every other year. This is the only assurance that MDAs will keep to their mandate, and assist government in delivering public services to the citizenry in a satisfactory way and manner.

The alternative is what we are experiencing today: overlapping mandates and functions, MDAs dissipating energy in performing functions that bear little relevance to their core mandate, critical functions like certificate verification, orientation and induction programmes for newly recruited officers being undone as observed in Enugu State and Accreditation of Management Trainers and Management Training Institutions as a Condition for sanitizing Training Function in Nigeria and ensuring that Government gets value for money spent in training public officers (the major mandate of CMD) neglected and /or considered secondary to undertaking training programme delivery.

The case for Corporate Planning has been made and guidelines for its conduct articulated. Government at all levels should as a matter of reform priority require MDAs to conduct Corporate Planning as basis for future recruitment of officers. Additionally, the National Assembly should consider insisting on the availability of a Corporate Planning report before consideration of budget proposals of MDAs.

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