

End of the First Half > What's Your 2nd Half Game Plan?

By Lloyd Franke

When the buzzer sounds ending the first half of the game, the reporter invariably asks one of the coaches heading to the locker room why his team is ahead/behind, what's working or not working, and changes to be made in the second half?

At the mid point of the year, business leaders as coaches for their companies and teams must answer the same questions. If results are not meeting goals set in the annual plan at the start of the year, what are we going to do about it? If we are on track, how will we maintain or improve performance?

The halftime review

1. Set aside a day for the management team to meet off site, off the playing field.

You need concentrated time and everyone's focused attention to get the benefit of this session.

2. Use a structured approach to review performance toward annual goals.

Each of the goals should have a champion assigned who takes responsibility for its achievement. Ask each champion:

- Were last month's milestones completed?
- Are we on track to meet the goal?
- What have been the accomplishments to date?
- What are the disappointments?
- What lessons have we learned so far?
- What are the milestones for next month?

3. Look for performance *facts* not excuses, complaints, or blame.

Considering the facts, which goals are in trouble (red light)? Which are on track (green light)? And, which are in some doubt (yellow light)? (This is a concept used successfully in the Best Year Yet® program, achieving results for over 25 years. www.bestyearyet.com)

The green light goals may need little attention but to reconfirm their importance, acknowledge the good work of the leaders championing them, and discuss lessons learned and strategies that might help others.

The goals considered “red light”, in danger of not being met require more in depth review:

- Is the goal still critically important?
 - Do we change it or abandon it?
 - How should it be revised?
 - What additional resources are needed for accomplishment?
 - In light of the current environment, how do we change the game plan going forward?
- Put on the brakes?

Those rated “yellow light” also need more scrutiny to push them forward – like many drivers when encountering a yellow traffic light, step on the gas! What are the critical elements to get this in the “green”?

4. Set up Incremental Steps to Success

What should we be monitoring in addition to revenue and profit? What are the indicators that we must watch to prevent end-of-month surprises? In sales, for example, there are many events that lead up to the final closing of the sale: pipeline progress, marketing touches, prospect meetings, and proposals. Each of these can be tracked and measured to give an early forecast of sales. If there aren't enough prospects in the pipeline, sales will suffer. What's the closing rate - how many new prospects must we have in order to close one sale? To get prospects, we must make multiple contacts or marketing touches – how are we doing that? Set the goals, and monitor activities regularly to ensure that the final objectives will be achieved.

5. Take Timeouts.

Schedule a monthly 2 – 4 hour session with the management team to review progress – it's essential to keep everyone focused and on track.

6. Attitude Check

Finally, before going back into the game, take a reading on the team's attitude:

- Do we *believe* in what we are doing and that we can achieve success?
- Are we acting to reinforce our beliefs?
- Are we living the values that are essential to a winning culture?
- Are managers passing the vision and goals to their employees? Spread the word!
- Keep the strategic plan in view and review regularly

Commitment of all the key players is essential to winning in sports as well as in business. Think about the difference in winning teams versus losing – many times it is a matter of attitude and commitment; the difference in attitude of “trying” and “doing”. As Yoda said in “Star Wars”: *“Try not. Do or do not. There is no try!”*

7. Now execute the game plan!

Cynics will say that nothing comes from these review sessions: *“lots of talk but nothing changes.”* You as a Leader/Manager/Coach must make sure that there IS action. Watch the scoreboard, make sure the “plays” are being made, provide feedback as needed and look forward to WINNING!

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