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How Do You Make Sure Your Teams are Working on the Right Things?

Municipal management often has to contend with a multitude of plans and strategies in everything from infrastructure and urban planning to environmental protection, social and economic development, public safety, and culture. It fragments planning, complicates coordination, and generates seemingly endless red tape. Yet that variety is also an incredible opportunity to build a clear, holistic vision that can mobilize not only administrators, but elected officials and the community as well.

A unified snapshot helps everyone understand the scale of the collective responsibility while acknowledging the municipal body's real limits. Building on that common understanding lets management and the council prioritize, create leeway, and focus their energy on the areas with the greatest impact. Far from being a burden, the consistency becomes a powerful lever for governance, transparency, and the creation of public value for all citizens.

What is integrated planning?

Integrated planning is a holistic approach that brings all planned actions together in a single overview. This lets management:

- Ensure that teams are working on the things that really matter
- Balance the work to be done with the resources available
- Develop a solid basis for discussions with the council
- Strengthen collaboration and mutual support between departments

Far from being yet another burden, integrated planning is a collective guiding star.

Four steps to building a holistic priority plan

1. List all of the plans, projects, and actions planned over the next 12 to 24 months.

This inventory provides an overall picture of the work to be done and the resources that work will take. It also lays a solid factual foundation for shared, realistic priorities.

2. Establish common selection criteria.

These criteria need to consider both **value** (for elected officials, for citizens, and for partners) and **feasibility** (financial resources, available expertise, complexity, deadlines, etc.). Management and the council can then validate them to ensure they are legitimate and relevant.

3. Review projects as a team.

Each department should compare its projects and activities against the criteria, with the help of a planning expert and an effective tool. Doing so breaks down silos and encourages systems thinking while encouraging people to look for synergies.

4. Choose the projects with the greatest added value.

Finally, general management can develop a holistic priority plan that aligns the available resources to the most impactful projects

and activities. The result: a clear, realistic, and inspiring roadmap for the entire municipal body and its partners.

Potential pitfall

Keep in mind that the goal is not **prioritization**, but **selection**. In other words, the plan shouldn't focus on ranking or prioritizing every action, but on identifying a limited number of projects that can realistically be completed with the resources available. This does call for a certain amount of managerial courage, as some projects will need to be shelved. However, it helps to keep one key question in mind:

"Are our teams working on the most important things they have the means to achieve?"

Success factors

A successful approach calls for a **planning expert** and an **effective tool** for identifying and tracking all of the projects. The expert can provide multiple types of support: coordinating the process, training and equipping department representatives, leading information-sharing sessions and, if needed, advising the director general's team and the council in negotiations.

A tool for leadership and confidence

As a municipal manager, you are both a **guardian of the municipality's vision** and the **conductor of its priorities**. Integrated planning helps you fully play these parts by providing:

- Clear guidelines for mobilizing your teams
- Greater resilience to the unexpected
- A common language for dialoguing with communities and the council

With citizens placing more and more pressure on their municipalities, integrated planning has become more than just a practical exercise. It is a meaningful approach to restore team confidence, strengthen relationships between administrators and elected officials, and pave the way for tangible results for the community. What's more, it serves as a reminder that even in complicated settings, it is still possible to create **clear, realistic shared goals**. It shows that thoroughness does not preclude enthusiasm and that holistic municipal action is not only more effective and feasible, but also more inspiring for all.

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