



Don Barker

BHB Structural Engineers
Salt Lake City, UT

Member Since: 2009

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Don Barker is a decisive person. When he was let go from his last employer in 2002, it took him less than a month to recruit a few partners and start his own company. Now more than a decade later, BHB Structural Engineers is the largest structural engineering firm in Utah, with 26 employees who have provided their expertise to more than 1250 projects. In 2012, BHB had its best year ever, with revenues of \$3.3M.

Although things are running smoothly now, it wasn't always that way. Personality conflicts and a lack of defined roles and responsibilities threatened to tear the group apart. "We had misperceptions. Too much personal conflict, too much animosity," Barker explains. "After awhile it wasn't fun to come to work anymore, there was too much conflict."

In addition to day-to-day stress, the conflict and lack of communication was also hurting the company when it came to long-term planning. "We didn't do any planning, we just started doing," he recalls.

In 2009, Barker joined TAB, which he says has been a "lifesaver" for BHB. "We'd probably only be about a third the size if not for TAB, if we even existed still. I always tell my TAB facilitator that because of him is why we are where we are now."



Through TAB, Barker learned about DISC®, a personality assessment tool that helped him and his partners understand each other better and improve communication. They also clarified their respective responsibilities, and learned how to support each other in their roles.

In addition, BHB started to participate in TAB's Strategic Business Leadership (SBL) process, which helps companies set strategic goals and put a plan in place to achieve them. At the end of each year, the BHB executive team meets offsite where they determine the critical success factors for the upcoming year. For these, they set goals, strategies, and action steps to help them reach their objectives.

The SBL workshops are facilitated by TAB, which enables everyone from the company to participate fully. Barker says the workshops are imperative to allow his leadership team to focus on strategic priorities. He also notes that being prepared is key. "If the workshops aren't planned, you're not going to get anything out of them," he says.

Quarterly offsite workshops ensure that BHB's strategic roadmap stays on track. Barker also confers with his partners every couple of months to check on their progress, and meets with employees twice a year.

Barker says that BHB is probably the only engineering firm in the area that follows a strategic planning process like SBL. But he also credits it with much of the firm's success. "I think we're the type of company we are because of the SBL process."

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