

Put Visioning into Your Planning

Leone Ohnoutka, WVU Extension Agent, Wood County

Purpose:

To introduce the strategic planning process to clubs and organizations and initiate a process to develop a vision statement for the organization.

Goals:

1. Participants will gain an understanding of the strategic planning process.
2. Participants will learn the differences between strategic planning and traditional planning.
3. Participants will learn the difference between a vision statement and a mission statement.
4. Participants will be able to develop a vision statement for their organization.

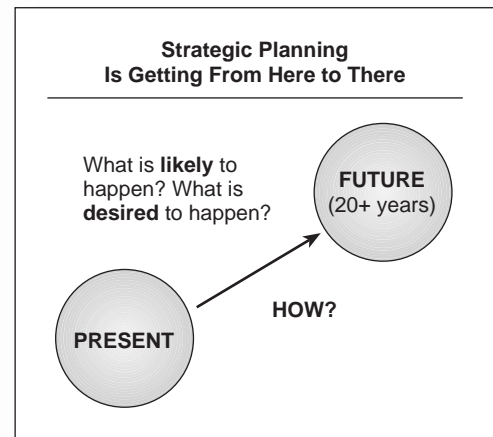
Discussion Starters/Roll Call Ideas

1. Ask each participant to tell one dream they have for the organization.
2. Ask each participant to share an organization in the area that they perceive as having vision and being successful.
3. Ask each participant to make a commitment of at least one action he or she is willing to do to make sure the organization will be thriving five years from now. Have participants write their action on a 3 × 5-inch card and keep it until the end of the meeting. At the close of the presentation, ask participants if they have made any changes in their personal plans for action and what the changes will be.

Introduction

In *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, Lewis Carroll wrote, "You'll eventually get somewhere, but whether it's where you want to go is another matter."

Alice's trek through Wonderland is not unlike the journey that many organizations find themselves on today. Like Alice, today's organizations operate in an environment of uncertainty. Increasingly, they are finding their way, thanks, in large part, to a management technique called strategic planning.



Strategic planning is a process enabling an organization to get from where it is today to where it wants to be in the future. The strategic planning process focuses on five key questions:

1. Where have you been?
2. Where are you now?
3. Where do you want to go?
4. How will you get there?
5. How will you know when you are there?

The result is a simple but powerful process that honors the past, assesses the present, and stimulates our minds to describe our desired future.

Strategic planning is different from the traditional planning organizations do annually. Traditional planning generally begins and ends with the consideration of the next year of activity. Planning involves one year at a time.

Strategic planning encompasses – but goes well beyond – the next year of activity. Some strategic plans are cast as far ahead as 20 years. Probably the most important difference between strategic planning and traditional planning is that strategic planning is oriented to the future. Plans are based on a vision of the future rather than on current problems or needs. It looks through the present to the future.

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The Strategic Planning Process

Vision Statement: The first step in a strategic planning process is the creation of a vision statement – a description of what the organization would ideally look like in 5, 10, or even 20 years. The objective is to look far beyond the problems of today and to visualize the organization under the very best of conditions.

SWOT Analysis: The second step in the strategic planning process is to do an analysis of the organization's Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT analysis). To do a SWOT analysis, you must first look internally at your organization's strengths and weaknesses. You can do this by asking two questions: (1) what is it we do really well; and (2) what is it we have problems with.

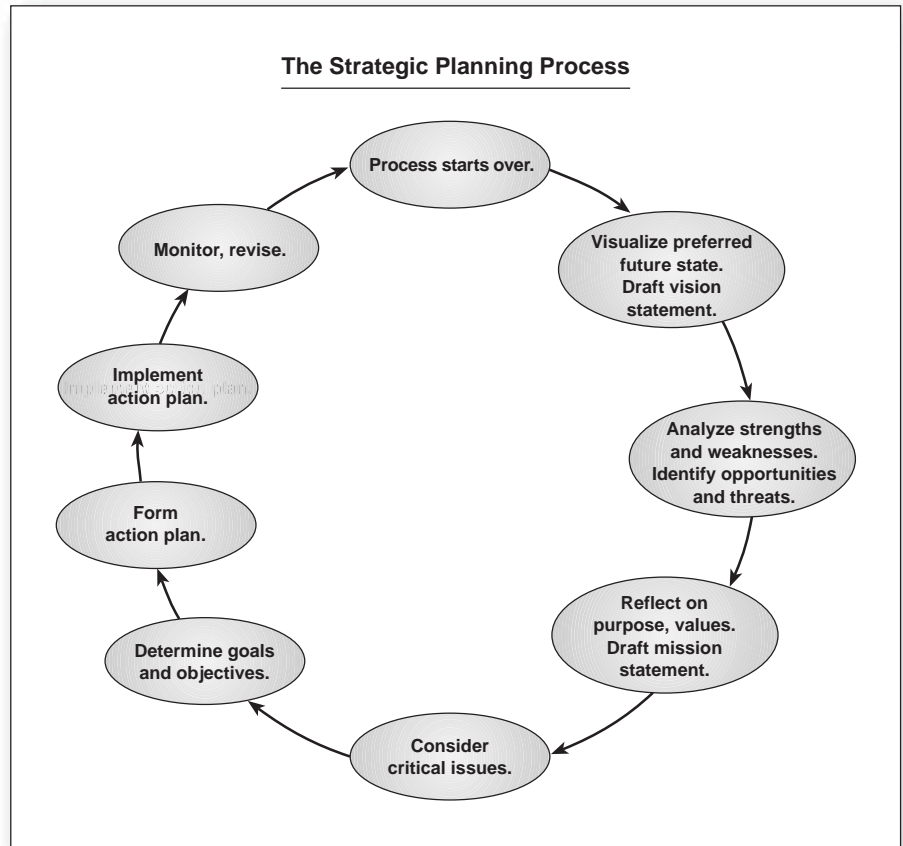
Once the internal analysis is complete, you'll want to analyze the external forces affecting your organization.

Anticipate changes in the environment that can be a threat to your organization. Then, analyze how these threats can be turned into an opportunity on which the organization can capitalize to reach its desired future.

Activity: Discuss some environmental factors affecting your club today. Environmental factors are often categorized as legal, political, economic, and social. Examples of environmental factors affecting club membership might be: social – competition from other organizations and activities, resulting in a decrease in membership; economic – more two-income families having less time for community organizations.



Mission: The mission statement describes what the organization is in business to do. Usually limited to just a few words, the statement defines the purpose of the organization, establishes the scope of the organization's activities, and provides overall direction for the organization.



Activity: If the organization has a mission statement, ask participants if they know what their mission statement is. Share the organization's mission statement with the group and discuss why it is a mission statement.

Goals and Objectives: The SWOT analysis will identify several critical issues. These will suggest a number of goals or general directions the organization wants to take in the intermediate to long-term future. Each goal, in turn, suggests a number of objectives describing what specifically is to be accomplished by what date. Goals are usually achievable in three to five years, while objectives are targets for the current year.

Action Plan: At the heart of the strategic planning process is the formulation of actions to achieve the desired objectives. The first-year action plan is composed of all those objectives scheduled for the year immediately following the planning period.

Implement Action Plan: All the planning in the world won't accomplish anything unless you implement the action plan. The plan needs to designate who will do the tasks to meet the objectives and when they will be accomplished.

Evaluate: No process is complete without evaluating the outcome, revising the plan, and starting the process all over again.

Strategic planning is an ongoing process. Organizations must constantly review their vision and mission statements and develop goals, objectives, and actions to help the organization reach its desired future.



Developing a Vision Statement for Your Organization

Let's take a closer look at what a vision statement is.

Good visions:

- describe how an organization serves its members, its community, and the world
- are inspiring, compelling, and bold; they raise expectations and actions to achieve a higher purpose
- embody members' deepest values and give members courage to express those values in their organization
- are strategic, distinguishing a particular organization from all other organizations
- use vivid language, word pictures, and metaphors to communicate enthusiasm and excitement
- are specific, concise, and brief

Activity: Which of these statements is a strategic vision?

Have participants close their eyes as you read the following statements. Remind them that a vision statement will give a clear picture of the place being described.

- A wonderful small city with friendly neighbors, good schools, and outdoor recreation.
- Crown Jewel of the Ozarks: A small college town with a high quality of life, vital and diversified economy, and recreational opportunities in the nearby Ozark National Forest.

The second statement is the vision statement in this example. The first statement could describe any rural town and probably sounds like the town you live in.

Activity: Give participants about five minutes to individually answer the following question:

As you think ahead to five years from now, what two or three things should be so evident about the

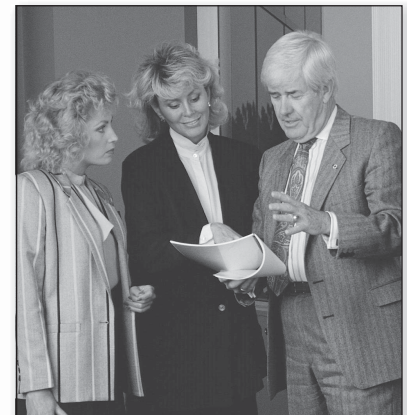
_____ organization that, when people in the community are asked about it, they'll reply "Oh, yes. It's the organization that _____."

Divide participants into small groups of three or four and have them discuss their response to the question. After the discussion, have them develop a vision statement from all responses. Give each small group a sheet of flip chart paper to record their vision statement for sharing with the large group.

Have each small group report their vision statement to the large group.

Select three or four members to compile the small group vision statements into one statement for the organization.

Bring the new vision statement back to the next meeting for discussion with all members. All members should have input into the final vision statement before it is adopted by the organization.



Summary

Creating a strategic vision for your organization is a powerful mechanism for empowering your membership. Use the following activity to demonstrate how a vision statement works to empower the organization.

Activity: Divide members into three groups. Have each group sing a different song at the same time to illustrate an uncommon vision. Songs to use: "Row, Row, Row Your Boat," "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star," "Three Blind Mice"

Discussion: Think of the future of your organization as a large choir, with each member of your club having a part to sing. The choir is preparing for a major concert in the future with the outside world as your audience. If there is a common vision that is shared and supported by the entire organization, the concert will be a beautiful uplifting experience, with each person contributing his or her part to create a powerful effect on the audience and the performers.

If the vision is not shared or if there are conflicting visions (song sheets), the result will be a chaotic collision of notes that compete with one another and create a dissonance among the performers and with the audience.

Closing

We live in extraordinary times, times of tremendous challenges and great opportunities. Never has there been a greater need to plan for the future.

The strategic visioning process focuses and channels the energy, creativity, and ideas of members into a powerful strategic vision and action plan. A vision is a powerful tool for an organization because a vision:

- comes from the heart
- expresses your deepest values
- describes what your organization offers to each member, to its community, and to the world
- leaps over present constraints to a desired future
- provides meaning to your organization by describing who you are and what you want to become – a personal portrayal of your desired future



The concept of the strategic visioning process can best be summed up by the words of William Jennings Bryan:

Destiny is not a matter of chance; it is a matter of choice. It is not a thing to be waited for; it is a thing to be achieved.

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