



## **STRATEGIC PLANNING: WHAT IS IT, ANYWAY?**

### **Create a Roadmap for Your Organization that Actually Means Something!**

A strategic plan is a picture of where you're going and how it will look when you get there. The plan should include the important steps needed to achieve your goal, and a way to measure how you know when you've arrived there. The words should be clear, compelling and easy to understand. The plan should explain how the organization will meet its mission and serve its members.

#### **What's the process?**

The process to create this plan is different for every organization. The important thing is to do it. Set aside time. Brainstorm. Discuss. Build consensus. Write and edit. Check with stakeholders. Finalize and then create a communication plan to drive the message forward and make things happen.

#### **How do you start?**

The best way to start is with a big, exciting goal. Then, brainstorm some actions that could get you there. One of my mentors taught me that when setting goals and an action plan, it's easier to frame it up not as something you hope for in the future, but as something you've already accomplished.

When you apply this tactic, ask questions like:

- It's the end of 2007. What have we accomplished?
- How did we get there?
- What were the keys to our success?
- What were the one or two decisions we made that made a difference?
- What have we learned that will help us move forward?

#### **Why it Works**

It's amazing what people come up with when they imagine they have already accomplished something. It takes challenges out of the realm of the impossible, and into something people can actually picture and feel.



You can do this for any time frame: one year, two years, three years, even ten years.

Your plan will, at first, include just big picture goals and strategies. But, at some point, you want to write a more detailed plan so that everyone involved understands what has to be done.

This is similar to project management. You won't achieve a project if you don't break it down into action steps and time frames.

### **So We Have a Plan, Now What?**

Once a strategic plan has been constructed, your organization must decide how the plan should best be communicated – in a meeting, via a written report, or a combination of several procedures?

You need a complete strategy for communicating the plan. The key leaders can and should make formal and informal presentations to all of the stakeholders including:

- Employees
- Board of Directors
- Clients
- Customers
- Association members
- Other interested parties
- The media

These presentations should be exciting, interesting, and paint a picture of the future. Around that “vision statement” you have to make it real with stories and examples that bring it alive and show people how they can contribute to making it happen.

Creating a great presentation requires a commitment of time and energy and resources. You need to think it through, script it and have your talking points down cold.



## **Why This Matters**

It is important to effectively communicate your strategic plan because if people don't know about the plan and understand the plan, they can't make it happen. Every single person in the organization and every single stakeholder should be able to state the plan and their role in executing it.

It should be clear, succinct, and repeatable.

If you create a plan and don't take time to communicate it, you may as well not make a plan. Your communication strategy is a key to your success.