



Strategic Planning in Uncertain Times

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What we will cover today:

- Why strategic planning is essential for flourishing, not just surviving, in uncertain times.
- The core elements that make a strategic plan clear, actionable, and sustainable.
- How to begin the strategic planning process, including questions to ask and tools to use.
- Common pitfalls to avoid and how to ensure your plan remains a living, flexible guide.
- Practical next steps for bringing strategic planning into your ministry or school.

Setting The Foundation

- What are your thoughts about and experiences with strategic planning?
- What is the most challenging aspect of considering strategic planning for your ministry or school?

Why Strategy Can't Wait

Planning is a necessity, not a luxury

- A must for survival

Ask: how are we monitoring and managing risk factors in an ever-changing landscape?

- An act of stewardship and obedience

Ask: how do we know God's vision and plan for our school or ministry?

- Essential to the confidence of your donors and their willingness to invest

Ask: How do our donors know we are leading with a clear, God-led plan?

Strategic thinking is more important than a plan

"In preparing for battle I have always found that plans are useless, but planning is indispensable."

-Eisenhower

"Most successful organizations undertake a '20 Mile March' of methodical steps toward their goal, not a sprint to the finish line."

-Jim Collins

No organization can afford *not* to be thinking strategically all the time!

This is more of a culture than a document.

You Need a Roadmap To Flourish

- Your context is constantly changing; unfocused, reactive leadership fails.
- Focuses your future on God's guidance and provision
- Key to your success in raising funds; creates your case for support and gives financial partners confidence in your leadership
- Plays a key role in hiring staff, and recruiting board members and other volunteers
- Impacts the culture of your organization including morale, unity, and expectations for the quality of your work

Your NorthStar for Planning

- Mutually understood mission, vision, and core values that guide and compel
- Your plan helps you answer:
 - Why do you do what you do?
 - Can each member of your team see and feel the impact of your work?
 - Is each aspect of your work missionally aligned?
 - What is working? (strengths and opportunities)
 - What is not? (weaknesses and threats)

What's Wrong With Most Strategic Plans?

1

Static

Written as if no internal or external changes are going to impact the plan over its life – *The illusion of control*

2

Episodic

Thinking strategically every three years

3

No mechanism to adapt

Plans can't change; they are written annually

What's Wrong With Most Strategic Plans?

4

Die with changes in leadership and board

“That’s not my plan.”

5

Seeking the Holy Spirit once

Operating in our own strength and skills

Starting Well

Laying the Foundation

Core Elements of a Clear, Actionable Plan

- Three-year rolling plan
- Created with stakeholder input
- Strong success themes and SCORE analysis
- Bathed in prayer throughout the process
- Tools to execute it, adjust it, and refresh it
- Communicated across your community
- Celebrated when key milestones are met (God gets the glory)

Outcomes of a Good Strategic Plan

- Broader community surrounding the mission believes this is God's will for your future
- Focuses the organization's resources
- Engages stakeholders in the writing process and implementation
- Develops within the organization a strategic thinking mindset and culture

The Most Important Statement To Consider

Our ministry/school is successful when...

- How you define success drives everything you do
- Alignment with how the board, leadership, and staff define success is vital to a strategic plan that seeks to bring unity around a common vision
- Checking the alignment of your success themes with your mission is a critical first step in the strategic planning process
- Misalignment at this step will undermine the entire strategic planning process

Example Success Themes:

- 1. Christ-Centered Transformation:** (Ministry A) is successful when participants experience spiritual growth and are inspired to live like Jesus in their personal, professional, and community lives. This transformation influences their homes, workplaces, and places of worship.
- 2. Faith-Driven Leadership in the Marketplace:** (Ministry B) is successful when the program equips and inspires marketplace leaders to integrate their faith into all aspects of life and leadership, embodying Christ-like values in their professional roles. By living out their calling, they make a meaningful impact for the Kingdom, influencing workplaces and communities with purpose and integrity.

Example Success Themes:

- 3. Community Impact and Service:** (Ministry C) is successful when graduates develop a sincere commitment to serving Christ in diverse communities, seeking the city's welfare and caring for others, including the marginalized.
- 4. Relational Network and Support:** (Ministry D) is successful when it fosters a lasting ecosystem and network of graduates who support, encourage, and learn from one another, creating a strong sense of community during and after the program.
- 5. Sustainable Growth:** (Ministry E) is successful when the program is financially supported, ensuring its sustainability and future impact.

The SCORE Assessment

- **STRENGTHS:** essential to carry out your mission
- **CULTURE:** descriptors of your current culture
- **OBSTACLES:** challenges that keep you from effectively fulfilling your mission
- **RISKS:** must be addressed to avoid derailing your mission
- **ENVIRONMENT:** external issues that most affect your future

Lessons Learned and The Path Forward



Achieving Unity

Who Owns Your Strategic Plan?

- Two Missteps that work against unity
 - Too Narrow - not my plan
 - Too broad - never completed
- Is it executable?
- The BIG question, only one true Owner

Power of Small (aligned) Steps to Fuel Planning

- Planning process itself changes mindset and culture
- *Bullets, not cannonballs*
- Big goals can discourage, but small achievable steps motivate and rev up culture.
 - Creating forward momentum
- Hold team accountable for the small steps and celebrate
 - Foster awareness of mutual responsibility in planning

Strategic Planning Flow

A Magic Bullet? Just, maybe!

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graph LR; A[STRATEGIC PLAN] --> B[BUDGET]; B --> C[DEVELOPMENT PLAN]; C --> D[CASE FOR SUPPORT]
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STRATEGIC PLAN

BUDGET

**DEVELOPMENT
PLAN**

**CASE FOR
SUPPORT**

Next Steps

1. Define Success, Create Success Themes and gain alignment with Mission, Vision and Values
2. Complete a SCORE Assessment and prioritize each list
3. Start your planning process with a commitment to hear God speak, affirm his direction and follow it obediently

Thoughts and Questions?



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