

**Prepping for Strategic Planning**  
**SFCC Breakfast**  
**April 13, 2014**  
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1. For what purpose does an organization undergo an SP?
  - a) To maintain current services and programs?
  - b) To set future goals
  - c) To satisfy a board member's desire to change course

Answer: a and b, only c if single board member leaves personal agenda at the door

SPs are useful to examine *what* the organization has done/is doing well at the same time it charts what the org can do in the future. Part of the reason for an SP is to take a look back and examine what goals were attained ("benchmarks") and what were not. This should info be used to move forward.

2. Should the SP be developed by org's board of directors, leadership team the entire staff, or all of the above?

Answer: all of the above, although it's common to have the leadership team (board and staff directors) est. the goals (framework) first. It's imperative that you incorporate ideas and data from staff on the front lines. This is usually done through the process of Action Teams. More later.

The ED should take the pulse of the organization. Is there a general consensus that a SP is a good idea? If there is great divisiveness or a recent or soon-to-be change in leadership, then wait. Unless you have board and staff commitment to the process and the results, the process is a waste of time (and money).

## **PROCESS**

1. Get your house in order. Either ED or a senior staff person appointed by the ED gathers background info or environmental scan—financials, impact reports, development data, program data, client data, customer satisfaction survey data, feasibility study, a prior SP and a SWOT if completed, to make sure the initial group of SPlanners have what they need at their fingertips. This info is needed to not only develop goals but to establish objectives (action driven) and measures (often data driven).

2. Conduct a SWOT if you have not done one already. Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats will give you starting line from which to begin the journey of developing goals.

What does a SWOT look like and who participates? A template can look like anything you want. Probably best to give people a matrix with SWOT on one page so length is not daunting. Label each quadrant either SWO and T. Give participants one example per quadrant. Ask them to fill in the rest. Think outside the box. But also don't guess. A hunch is fine if you have some kind of proof like personal experience or conversation with a client, but a making stuff up is not ok. **[examples attached]**

Anyone who is familiar with your org can participate in the SWOT: board, all levels of staff, external stakeholders like volunteers, donors, funders, regulators and clients. The more participation you have the better but stick with people who know your organization well to avoid guessing. You may also want to conduct separate SWOTs for the different groups so you can separate the answers. For instance, a state funder may believe that a recent cuts in funding is a WEAKNESS. A board member may believe that same weakness is an OPPORTUNITY to identify new sources of funding that isn't so restricting. There are no right or wrong answers, just differing perspectives.

If a SWOT is meaningful, you should be able to literally pluck potential goal statements from it. For instance, an Opportunity might be "not enough certified after school programs in the area." A future goal might be: Develop after school programs in the neighborhoods where the majority of our clients live."

From this statement you could go on to develop objectives, like "Develop curriculum using other accredited ASPs," "Hire 4 staff by end of FY 14," and "Pilot the ASPs in 2 schools during FY 14 with plans to grow programs to 3-5 schools per year between FY 15 and FY17.

See how one observation led to an idea?

Caution, just because it's an opportunity, doesn't mean there is a need or that you should do it. BUT, it raised a good question and if enough of your staff and board believe this is a possible area of inclusion, you can shape a goal around it. Later when you get into the Action Teams you can "prove out" your goal and develop your objectives and measures. More on that later . . .

3. Hire someone outside the organization to moderate your SP process. It's difficult to be objective if you are responsible for the org's success or failure. You can't see the forest beyond the trees.

4. Maybe a week out, provide the background data to the SP participants so they have time to study their organization, not just their piece of it. Also provide the agenda so they have a clear expectation of time and purpose.
5. We don't have time to go into the full SP process but briefly -- the SP process should accomplish a few things at minimum: Values (shared beliefs, cultural and emotive, shared by staff, board and volunteers); a Vision statement or two (futuristic, what can you be in the future, a realistic dream); and Mission (clear statement of *what* the organization does, for *whom*, *where* does it do it, and *how* does it do it)

Example: "Heart Strings provides surgery and other resources to children with critical heart defects and disease through a network of medical providers, travel agents and host families committed to improving the health of sick children."

6. Then brainstorm your strategic areas of concentration—"strategies"
  1. Volunteer Recruitment
  2. Fundraising
  3. Client Services, etc.
7. Next devise goals such as
  1. Increase Volunteer Base;
  2. Increase grant funding; or
  3. Receive high marks from clients, etc.
8. Next are your Objectives and Outcomes:
  1. Recruit 10 new volunteers to help with voter registration drive by two weeks from early voting;
  2. Receive \$15,000 in new grants from family foundations to fund Literacy Program; and
  3. Achieve a 50% return visit rate, etc.
9. Because so many people lose interest after 2-3 hours, it is often practical to establish the Strategies and Goals in the SP session but leave the data gathering and measurement development to Action Teams made up of staff and board who can spend more time flushing out the document and providing realistic goals. Give Action Teams a few weeks to do their work. Then get consultant to organize the results into formulated SP.

The final product is a document that clearly outlines the organization's priorities but is also flexible enough to revise as you go. It shouldn't sit on a shelf, each staff and board member should refer to it monthly or quarterly to ensure the organization is focusing on these services and programs.