

A Strategic Planning Process for Public and Non-profit Organizations

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A pragmatic approach to strategic planning is presented for use by public and non-profit organizations. Benefits of the process are outlined and two examples of its application are presented—one involving a city government and the other a public health nursing service. Requirements for strategic planning success are discussed. Several conclusions are drawn, namely that: (1) strategic planning is likely to become part of the repertoire of public and non-profit planners; (2) planners must be very careful how they apply strategic planning to specific situations; (3) it makes sense to think of decision makers as strategic planners and strategic planners as facilitators of decision making across levels and functions; and (4) there are a number of theoretical and practical issues that still need to be explored.

I skate to where I think the puck will be.

Wayne Gretzky

Men, I want you to stand and fight vigorously and then run.
And as I am a little bit lame, I'm going to start running now.

General George Stedman
U.S. Army in the Civil War

Not all of the readers of *Long Range Planning* may be familiar with either Wayne Gretzky or George Stedman, but their two quotes capture the essence of strategic planning (often called corporate planning in Britain). Wayne Gretzky is perhaps the world's greatest offensive player in professional ice hockey. He holds the single-season scoring record for players in the National Hockey League—by such a wide margin that many consider him the greatest offensive player of all time. His quote emphasizes that *strategic thinking and acting*, not strategic planning *per se*, are most important. He does not skate around with a thick strategic plan in his back pocket. What

he does is to think and act strategically every minute of the game, in keeping with a simple game plan worked out with his coaches and key teammates in advance.

Let us explore Gretzky's statement further. What must one know and be able to do in order to make—and act on—a comment like Gretzky's? One obviously needs to know the purpose and rules of the game, the strengths and weaknesses of one's own team, the opportunities and threats posed by the other team, the game plan, the arena, the officials, and so on. One also needs to be a well-equipped, superbly conditioned, strong and able hockey player—and it does not hurt to play for a very good team. In other words, anyone who can assert confidently that he or she 'skates to where the puck will be' knows basically everything there is to know about strategic thinking and acting in hockey games.

Wayne Gretzky is respected primarily for his extraordinary offensive scoring ability. But defensive abilities obviously are important, too. Whereas Gretzky is a great offensive strategist, General George Stedman of the U.S. Army in the Civil War was an experienced defensive strategist. At one point he and his men were badly outnumbered by Confederate soldiers. A hasty retreat was in order, but it made sense to give the lame and wounded—and the General, too!—a chance to put some distance between themselves and the enemy before a full-scale retreat was called. The General and his men then would be in a position to fight another day.

Stedman had no thick strategic plan in his back pocket, either. At most he probably had a general battle plan worked out with his fellow officers and recorded in pencil on a map. Again, strategic

thinking and acting were what mattered, not any particular planning process.

How does this relate to public and non-profit organizations today? The answer is that strategic thought and action are increasingly important to the continued viability and effectiveness of governments, public agencies and non-profit organizations of all sorts. Without strategic planning it is unlikely that these organizations will be able to meet successfully the numerous challenges that face them.

The environments of public and non-profit organizations have changed dramatically in the last 10 years—as a result of oil crises, demographic shifts, changing values, taxing limits, privatization, centralization or decentralization of responsibilities, moves toward information and service-based economies, volatile macroeconomic performance, and so on. As a result, traditional sources of revenue for most governments are stable at best or highly unpredictable or declining at worst. Further, while the public may be against higher taxes, and while transfers of money from central to local governments are typically stable or declining, the public continues to demand a high level of government services. Non-profit organizations often are called on to take up the slack in the system left by the departure of public organizations or services, but may be hard-pressed to do so.

To cope with these various pressures, public and non-profit organizations must do at least three things. First, these organizations need to exercise as much discretion as they can in the areas under their control to ensure responsiveness to their stakeholders. Second, these organizations need to develop good strategies to deal with their changed circumstances. And third, they need to develop a coherent and defensible basis for decision making.

What is Strategic Planning?

Strategic planning is designed to help public and non-profit organizations (and communities) respond effectively to their new situations. It is a *disciplined effort to produce fundamental decisions and actions shaping the nature and direction of an organization's (or other entity's) activities within legal bounds.*¹ These decisions typically concern the organization's mandates, mission and product or service level and mix, cost, financing, management or organizational design. (Strategic planning was designed originally for use by *organizations*. In this article we will concentrate on its applicability to public and non-profit organizations. Strategic planning of course can be, and has been, applied to projects, functions—such as transportation, health care or education—and communities.)

What does strategic planning look like? Its most basic formal requirement is a series of discussions

and decisions among key decision makers and managers about what is *truly* important for the organization. And those discussions are the *big* innovation that strategic planning brings to most organizations, because in most organizations key decision makers and managers from different levels and functions almost *never* get together to talk about what is truly important. They may come together periodically at staff meetings, but usually to discuss nothing more important than, for example, alternatives to the organization's sick leave policy. Or they may attend the same social functions, but there, too, it is rare to have sustained discussions of organizationally relevant topics.

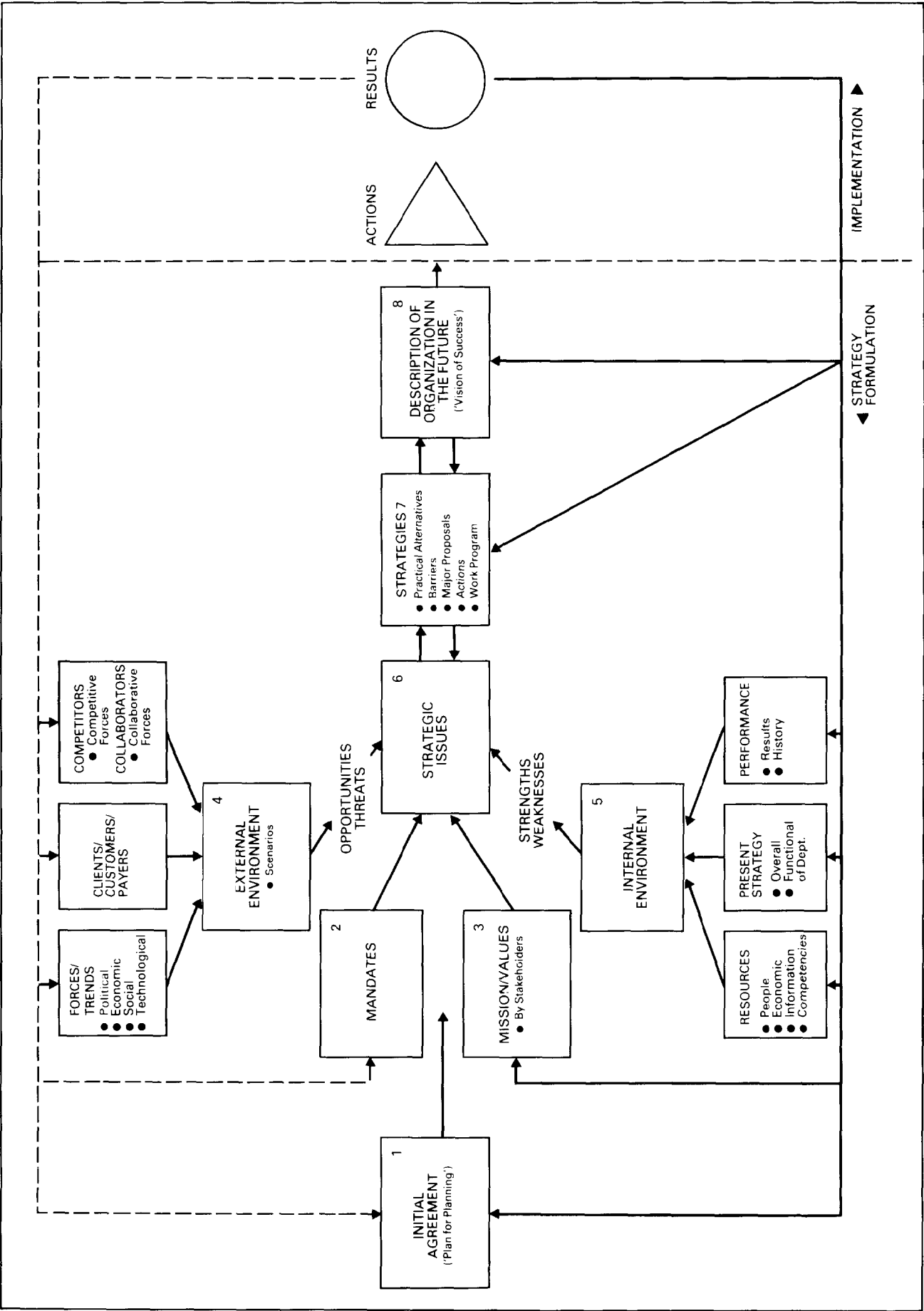
Usually key decision makers need a reasonably structured process to help them identify and resolve the most important issues their organizations face. One such process that has proved effective in practice is outlined in Figure 1. The process consists of the following eight steps:

1. *Development of an initial agreement concerning the strategic planning effort.* The agreement should cover: the purpose of the effort; preferred steps in the process; the form and timing of reports; the role, functions and membership of a strategic planning coordinating committee; the role, functions and membership of the strategic planning team; and commitment of necessary resource to proceed with the effort.

2. *Identification and clarification of mandates.* The purpose of this step is to identify and clarify the externally imposed formal and informal mandates placed on the organization. These are the *musts* confronting the organization. For most public and non-profit organizations these mandates will be contained legislation, articles of incorporation or charters, regulations, and so on. Unless mandates are identified and clarified two difficulties are likely to arise: the mandates are unlikely to be met, and the organization is unlikely to know what pursuits are allowed and not allowed.

3. *Development and clarification of mission and values.* The third step is the development and clarification of the organization's mission and values. An organization's mission—in tandem with its mandates—provides its *raison d'être*, the social justification for its existence.

Prior to development of a mission statement, an organization should complete a stakeholder analysis. A *stakeholder* is defined as any person, group or organization that can place a claim on an organization's attention, resources or output, or is affected by that output. Examples of a government's stakeholders are citizens, taxpayers, service recipients, the governing body, employees, unions, interest groups, political parties, the financial community and other governments.



Sources: based on materials of the Management Support Services Unit, Amherst H. Wilder Foundation, St Paul, MN; the Institute for Cultural Affairs, Minneapolis, MN; and the Office of Planning and Development, Hennepin County, MN.

Figure 1. Strategic planning process

In the simplest form of stakeholder analysis, the organization identifies its stakeholders and their 'stakes' in the organization, along with the stakeholders' criteria for judging the performance of the organization. The organization also explores how well it does against the stakeholders' criteria. Once a stakeholder analysis is completed, the organization can develop a mission statement that takes key stakeholder interests into account.

4. *External environmental assessment.* The fourth step is exploration of the environment outside the organization in order to identify the opportunities and threats the organization faces. Political, economic, social and technological trends and events might be assessed, along with the nature and status of various stakeholder groups, such as the organization's customers, clients or users, and actual or potential competitors or collaborators.

5. *Internal environmental assessment.* The next step is an assessment of the organization itself in order to identify its strengths and weaknesses. Three assessment categories include—following a simple systems model—organizational resources (inputs), present strategy (process) and performance (outputs). Unfortunately, most organizations can tell you a great deal about the resources they have, much less about their current strategy, and even less about how well they perform. The nature of accountability is changing, however, in that public and non-profit organizations are increasingly held accountable for their outputs as well as their inputs. A stakeholder analysis can help organizations adapt to this changed nature of accountability, because the analysis forces organizations to focus on the criteria stakeholders use to judge organizational performance. Those criteria are typically related to output. For example, stakeholders are increasingly concerned with whether or not state-financed schools are producing educated citizens. In many states in the United States, the ability of public schools to garner public financing is becoming contingent on the schools' ability to demonstrate that they do an effective job of educating their students.

The identification of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats—or SWOT analysis—in Steps 4 and 5 is very important because every effective strategy will build on strengths and take advantage of opportunities, while it overcomes or minimizes weaknesses and threats.

6. *Strategic issue identification.* Together the first five elements of the process lead to the sixth, the identification of strategic issues. *Strategic issues* are fundamental policy questions affecting the organization's mandates; mission and values; product or service level and mix, clients, users or payers, cost, financing, management or organizational design. Usually, it is vital that strategic issues be dealt with expeditiously and effectively if the organization is to survive and prosper. An organization that does not

address a strategic issue may be unable to head off a threat, unable to capitalize on an important opportunity, or both.

Strategic issues—virtually by definition—embody conflicts. The conflicts may be over ends (what); means (how); philosophy (why); location (where); timing (when); and who might be helped or hurt by different ways of resolving the issue (who). In order for the issues to be raised and resolved effectively, the organization must be prepared to deal with such conflicts.

A statement of a strategic issue should contain three elements. First, the issue should be described succinctly, preferably in a single paragraph. The issue itself should be framed as a question the organization can do something about. If the organization cannot do anything about it, it is not an issue—at least for the organization. An organization's attention is limited enough without wasting it on issues it cannot resolve.

Second, the factors that make the issue a fundamental policy question should be listed. In particular, what is it about mandates, mission, values or internal strengths and weaknesses and external opportunities and threats that make this a strategic issue? Listing these factors will become useful in the next step, strategy development.

Finally, the planning team should state the consequences of failure to address the issue. A review of the consequences will inform judgments of just how strategic, or important, various issues are. The strategic issue identification step therefore focuses organizational attention on what is truly important for the survival, prosperity and effectiveness of the organization—and provides useful advice on how to achieve these aims.

There are three basic approaches to the identification of strategic issues: the direct approach, the goals approach and the scenario approach.² The *direct approach*—in which strategic planners go straight from a view of mandates, mission and SWOTs to the identification of strategic issues—probably will work best for most governments and public agencies. The direct approach is best when one or more of the following conditions prevail: (1) there is no agreement on goals, or the goals on which there is agreement are too abstract to be useful; (2) there is no pre-existing vision of success and developing a consensually based vision will be difficult; (3) there is no hierarchical authority that can impose goals on the other stakeholders; or (4) the environment is so turbulent that development of goals or visions seems unwise, and partial actions in response to immediate, important issues seem most prudent. The direct approach, in other words, can work in the pluralistic, partisan, politicized and relatively fragmented worlds of most public organizations—as long as

there is a 'dominant coalition'³ strong enough and interested enough to make it work.

The *goals approach* is more in line with conventional planning theory which stipulates that an organization should establish goals and objectives for itself and then develop strategies to achieve those goals and objectives. The approach can work if there is fairly broad and deep agreement on the organization's goals and objectives—and if those goals and objectives themselves are detailed and specific enough to guide the identification of issues and development of strategies. This approach also is more likely to work in organizations with hierarchical authority structures where key decision makers can impose goals on others affected by the planning exercise. The approach, in other words, is more likely to work in public or non-profit organizations that are hierarchically organized, pursue narrowly defined missions and have few powerful stakeholders than it is in organizations with broad agendas and numerous powerful stakeholders.

Finally, there is the *scenario*—or 'vision of success'⁴—*approach*, whereby the organization develops a 'best' or 'ideal' picture of itself in the future as it successfully fulfills its mission and achieves success. The strategic issues then concern how the organization should move from the way it is now to how it would look and behave according to its vision. The vision of success approach is most useful if the organization will have difficulty identifying strategic issues directly; if no detailed and specific agreed-upon goals and objectives exist and will be difficult to develop; and if drastic change is likely to be necessary. As conception precedes perception⁵ development of a vision can provide the concepts that enable organizational members to see necessary changes. This approach is more likely to work in a non-profit organization than in a public-sector organization because public organizations are more likely to be tightly constrained by mandates.

7. *Strategy development.* In this step, strategies are developed to deal with the issues identified in the previous step. A *strategy* is a *pattern* of purposes, policies, programmes, actions, decisions and/or resource allocations that define what an organization is, what it does and why it does it. Strategies can vary by level, function and time frame.

This definition is purposely broad, in order to focus attention on the creation of consistency across *rhetoric* (what people say), *choices* (what people decide and are willing to pay for) and *actions* (what people do). Effective strategy formulation and implementation processes will link rhetoric, choices and actions into a coherent and consistent pattern across levels, functions and time.⁶

The author favours a five-part strategy development process (to which he was first introduced by the Institute for Cultural Affairs in Minneapolis).

Strategy development begins with identification of practical alternatives, dreams or visions for resolving the strategic issues. It is of course important to be practical, but if the organization is unwilling to entertain at least *some* 'dreams' or 'visions' for resolving its strategic issues, it probably should not be engaged in strategic planning.

Next, the planning team should enumerate the barriers to achieving those alternatives, dreams or visions, and not focus directly on their achievement. A focus on barriers at this point is not typical of most strategic planning processes. But doing so is one way of assuring that strategies deal with implementation difficulties directly rather than haphazardly.

Once alternatives, dreams and visions, along with barriers to their realization, are listed, the team should prepare or request major proposals for achieving the alternatives, dreams or visions directly, or else indirectly through overcoming the barriers. For example, a major city government did not begin to work on strategies to achieve its major ambitions until it had overhauled its archaic civil service system. That system clearly was a barrier that had to be confronted before the city government could have any hope of achieving its more important objectives.

After the strategic planning team prepares or receives major proposals, two final tasks must be completed. The team must identify the actions needed over the next one to two years to implement the major proposals. And finally, the team must spell out a detailed work programme, covering the next 6 months to a year, to implement the actions.

An effective strategy must meet several criteria. It must be technically workable, politically acceptable to key stakeholders, and must accord with the organization's philosophy and core values. It must also be ethical, moral and legal.

8. *Description of the organization in the future.* In the final (and not always necessary) step in the process the organization describes what it should look like as it successfully implements its strategies and achieves its full potential. This description is the organization's 'vision of success'. Few organizations have such a description or vision, yet the importance of such descriptions has long been recognized by well-managed companies and organizational psychologists.⁷ Typically included in such descriptions are the organization's mission, its basic strategies, its performance criteria, some important decision rules, and the ethical standards expected of all employees.

These eight steps complete the strategy formulation process. Next come actions and decisions to implement the strategies, and, finally, the evaluation of results. Although the steps are laid out in a linear, sequential manner, it must be emphasized that the

process is iterative. Groups often have to repeat steps before satisfactory decisions can be reached and actions taken. Furthermore, implementation typically should not wait until the eight steps have been completed. As noted earlier, strategic thinking *and* acting are important, and all of the thinking *does* not have to occur before any actions are taken.

To return to Wayne Gretzky and George Stedman, one can easily imagine them zooming almost intuitively through the eight steps—while already on the move—in a rapid series of discussions, decisions and actions. The eight steps merely make the process of strategic thinking and acting more orderly and allow more people to participate in the process.

The process might be applied across levels and functions in an organization as outlined in Figure 2. The application is based on the system used by the 3M Corporation.⁸ In the system's first cycle, there is 'bottom up' development of strategic plans within a framework established at the top, followed by reviews and reconciliations at each succeeding level. In the second cycle, operating plans are developed to implement the strategic plans. Depending on the situation, decisions at the top of the organizational hierarchy may or not require policy board approval, which explains why the line depicting the process flow diverges at the top.

The Benefits of Strategic Planning

What are the benefits of strategic planning? Government and non-profit organizations in the United States are finding that strategic planning can help them:

- ☆ think strategically;
- ☆ clarify future direction;
- ☆ make today's decisions in light of their future consequences;
- ☆ develop a coherent and defensible basis for decision making;
- ☆ exercise maximum discretion in the areas under organizational control;
- ☆ solve major organizational problems;
- ☆ improve performance;
- ☆ deal effectively with rapidly changing circumstances;
- ☆ build teamwork and expertise.

While there is no guarantee that strategic planning will produce these benefits, there are an increasing number of case example and studies that indicate it can help as long as key leaders and decision makers want it to work, and are willing to invest the time,

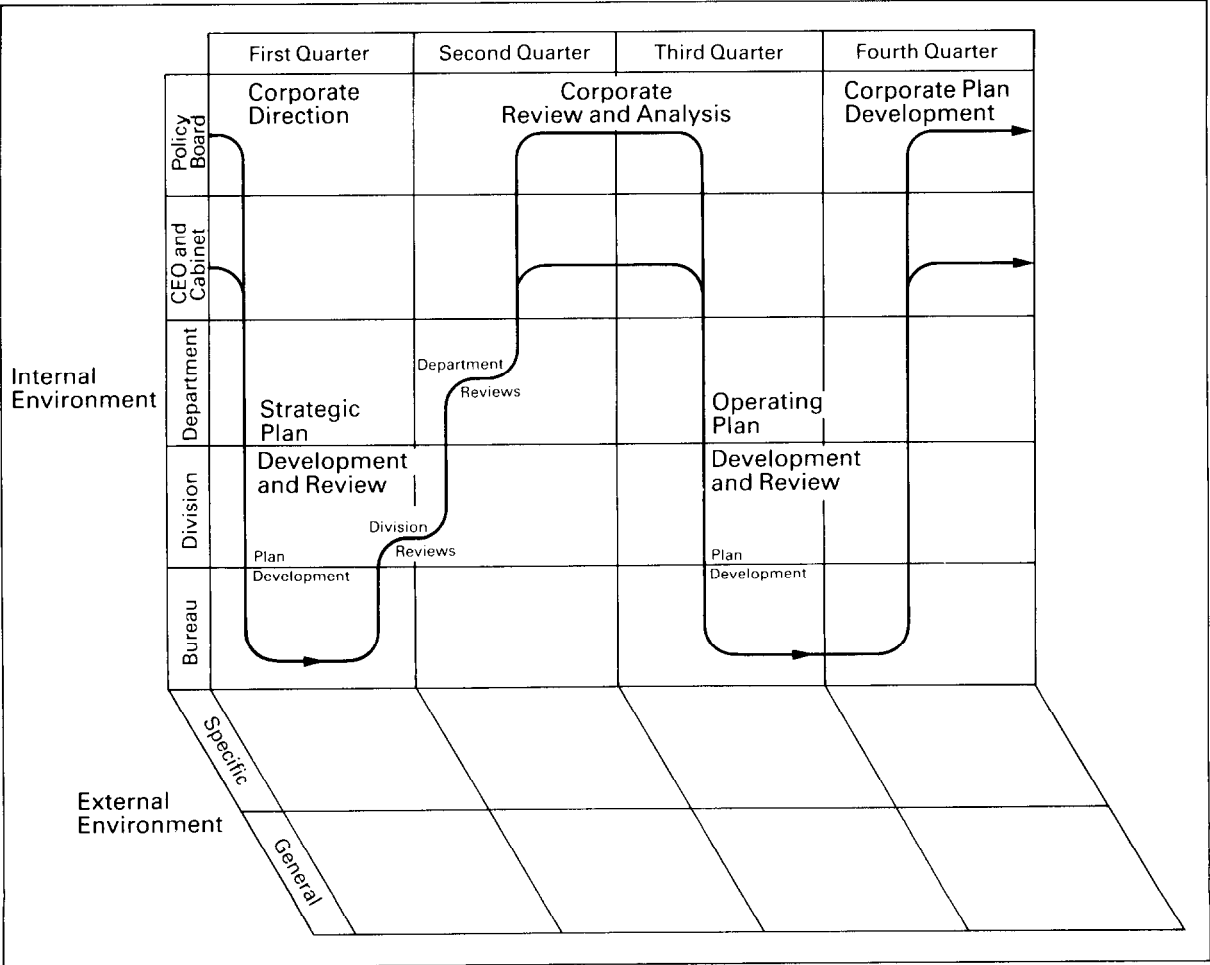


Figure 2. Annual strategic planning process

attention and resources necessary to make it work.⁹ In the next two sections we will turn to two cases in which the strategic planning process outlined above produced desirable results. The author served as a strategic planning consultant in each case.

Case No. 1—Suburban City

Suburban City is an older, middle-class, 'first ring' suburb of a major metropolitan city in the American Midwest. Suburban City is regarded among city management professionals as one of the best-managed cities in the state. The city has 227 employees and an annual budget of \$25.6m. The assistant city manager was the leader of the strategic planning team. The city manager was a strong supporter and member of the team. The team performed a stakeholder analysis, developed a mission statement, identified strategic issues, and developed strategies to deal with its most important issues. They are now implementing their strategies.

The following strategic issues were identified:

- ☆ What should the city do to enhance and improve its vehicular and pedestrian movements throughout its hierarchy of transportation facilities?
- ☆ What should the city do to improve its image as a place to live and work?
- ☆ What should the city do to attract high quality housing that meets the needs of a changing population and maintains the integrity of the existing housing stock?
- ☆ What should the city do to maintain its physical facilities while responding to changing demands for public services?
- ☆ What should the city do to restore confidence in its water quality and supply?

Strategies were developed to deal with all these issues, but we will consider the strategies stemming from the last two. The first step in responding to changing demands for public services was to undertake a major survey of households and businesses in the city to uncover preferences for services. Now that the survey is complete, city staff are rearranging and reorganizing services and delivery mechanisms to respond effectively.

Suburban City residents became worried, to the point of panic, when the city's water supply was found to be contaminated by uncontrolled seepage from a creosote plant. The city immediately closed down the affected wells and began a major cleanup effort. The water *quality* problem was cleared up, but the public *perception* that the city had a serious water quality problem persisted. City staff undertook a public education effort to deal with this misperception, and another effort was undertaken

to deal with the remaining—and real, not just perceived—problem of a water *quantity*.

The strategic planning team did not go on to draft a 'vision of success' for the city. One reason why this was not done was that the team had had real difficulty developing a mission statement that all could support. The difficulty was not over content, interestingly enough, but over style. The city manager felt that a mission statement should give a person 'goose bumps', and the team had trouble drafting a mission statement that did. Finally, the city manager relented and supported a mission statement that had less of a physiological effect.

An interesting result of the city's strategic planning effort has been the recognition by members of the city council that they have not been an effective policy-making board. As a result, they hired a nationally known consultant on effective governance to help them become better policymakers. The city manager and assistant city manager are convinced that as the council becomes more effective, strategic planning for the city also will become more effective.

Case No. 2—Public Health Nursing Service

Public Health Nursing Service (Nursing Service) is a unit of the government of a large, urban county in the same state as Suburban City. The county executive director decided to explore the utility of strategic planning for the county by asking several units of county government, including Nursing Service, to undertake strategic planning.

Nursing Service is required by statute to control communicable diseases, and it also provides a variety of public health services at its clinics throughout the county. In 1984 Nursing Service had over 80 staff members and a budget of approximately \$3.5m.

The strategic planning team was led by the director of the service, who was a major supporter of the process. Other sponsors, though not strong supporters, included the county's executive director and the director of the department of public health, of which Nursing Service is a part. The department's health planner was an active and dedicated promoter of the process.

The director, deputy director and staff of Nursing Service saw strategic planning as an opportunity to rethink the service's mission and strategies in light of the rapidly changing health care environment. They were concerned, however, that they had been selected as 'guinea pigs' for the executive director's experiment in strategic planning. Nursing Service has always lived with the fear that it would be taken

over, put out of business or otherwise circumvented by the county government's huge medical centre, a famous hospital that was considering entering the home health care field (Nursing Service's main 'business') at the same time that Nursing Service began its strategic planning process. Nursing Service was afraid that any information or arguments it created as part of its process might be used against it by the executive director and county board to benefit the medical centre. A number of reassurances from the executive director were necessary before Nursing Service would believe it was not being 'set up'.

As a result of the process, Nursing Service identified a number of strategic issues. The principal issue was what the mission of Nursing Service should be given the changing health care environment. After rethinking their mission, the Nursing Service team rethought their first set of strategic issues. The team identified a new set of strategic issues concerning how the new mission could be pursued. Those issues were:

- ☆ What is the role of Nursing Service in ensuring the health of the citizens of the county?
- ☆ How should Nursing Service deal with the growing health care needs for which there is inadequate or no reimbursement of services?
- ☆ What is the role of Nursing Service (and the county) in ensuring quality in community-based health care?
- ☆ What is the role of Nursing Service (and the county) in ensuring community health planning and health system development?

Nursing Service went on to develop a set of strategies designed to deal with these issues. The set includes:

- ☆ Differentiation and clarification of line and staff functions of Nursing Service's supervisors and administrators.
- ☆ Development of a process for programme development and change.
- ☆ Development of an organizational structure which will allow the agency to respond most effectively and efficiently to the needs of communities as well as individuals and families.

By the end of 1987 these strategies should be fully implemented. The strategies do not necessarily deal with the strategic issues directly. Instead, they focus primarily on overcoming the barriers to dealing with the issues. Once the agency is organized properly and has programme development and change procedures in place, it will be better able to address the health care needs of the citizens of the county.

Nursing Service also developed a 'vision of success'

for itself. The Service's idealized scenario of itself envisages an agency thoroughly responsive to community, family and individual health care needs.

Ironically, it was Nursing Service's strategic planning efforts that in part forced strategic planning on the county board. Nursing Service prepared its strategic issues and then was asked to make a presentation to the county board on the issues and desirable strategies to address them. The issues ultimately concerned the county government's role in the health care field and the board's willingness to pay for meeting the health care needs of the county's residents. County board members realized they were completely unprepared to deal with the issues raised by Nursing Service. The board also realized that they might soon be faced with similar vexing issues by other departments engaged in strategic planning. The board felt a need to think about the county government as a whole, and about how to establish priorities, before they were presented with any more policy questions for which they had no answers. The board decided to go on a retreat in order to clarify the county government's mission, to identify strategic issues and to agree on a process for resolving the issues. They identified eight key issues, including issues prompted by Nursing Service's questions concerning the county's role in health care.

Also ironically, partway through Nursing Service's planning efforts, the county board forced the county's executive director to resign. Nursing Service then saw the strategic planning process as a real opportunity to think through its position so that it could have the most impact on the thinking of the new executive director.

What it Takes to Initiate and Succeed with Strategic Planning

The two case histories and the growing body of literature on strategic planning for the public and non-profit sectors help us draw some conclusions about what appears to be necessary to initiate an effective strategic planning process. At a minimum, any organization that wishes to engage in strategic planning should have: (1) a process sponsor(s) in a position of power to legitimize the process; (2) a 'champion' to push the process along;¹⁰ (3) a strategic planning team; (4) an expectation that there will be disruptions and delays; (5) a willingness to be flexible about what constitutes a strategic plan; (6) an ability to pull information and people together at key points for important discussions and decisions; and (7) a willingness to construct and consider arguments geared to very different evaluative criteria.

The criteria for judging the effectiveness of strategic planning for governments and public agencies

probably should differ from those used to judge effectiveness in the private sector. The nature of the public sector prevents exact duplication of private sector practice.¹¹ The more numerous stakeholders, the conflicting criteria they often use to judge governmental performance, the pressures for public accountability and the idea that the public sector is meant to do what the private sector cannot, all militate against holding government strategic planning practice to private-sector standards. Until governments and public agencies (as well as non-profit organizations) gain more experience with strategic planning, it seems best to judge their strategic planning efforts according to the extent to which they: (1) focus the attention of key decision makers on what is important for their organizations, (2) help set priorities for action, and (3) generate those actions.

Conclusions

Strategic planning for public and non-profit organizations is important and probably will become part of the standard repertoire of public and non-profit planners. It is important, of course, for planners to be very careful about how they engage in strategic planning, since every situation is at least somewhat different and since planning can be effective only if it is tailored to the specific situation in which it is used.¹² The process outlined in this article, in other words, represents a generic guide to strategic thought and action, and must be adapted with care and understanding to be useful in any given situation.

To assert that strategic planning will increase in importance raises the question of who the strategic planners are. It is likely that within the organization they may not hold job titles that include the word 'planner'; instead, they may be in policy making or line management positions.¹³ Since strategic planning tends to fuse planning and decision making, it makes sense to think of decision makers as strategic planners and to think of strategic planners as facilitators of decision making across levels and functions in organizations (and communities). The specific blend of technical knowledge and process expertise that the persons with the formal job title of planner should bring to strategic planning exercises, of course, will vary in different situations. The more the key decision makers already have the necessary technical knowledge, the more the planners will be relied upon to facilitate the process than to provide technical knowledge.

Finally, research must explore a number of theoretical and practical issues in order to advance the knowledge and practice of strategic planning for governments, public agencies and non-profit organizations. In particular, more detailed strategic planning models should specify key situational factors governing their use; provide specific advice

on how to formulate and implement strategies in different situations; be explicitly political; indicate how to deal with plural, ambiguous or conflicting goals or objectives; link content and process; indicate how collaboration as well as competition should be handled; and specify roles for the strategic planner. Progress has been made on all of those fronts¹⁴ (to which, it is hoped, this article and the book from which it is drawn attest), but more is necessary if strategic planning is to help governments, public agencies and non-profit organizations, as well as communities and functions, fulfill their missions and serve their stakeholders effectively, efficiently and responsibly.

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