

# **Strategic Planning Handbook**

# STRATEGIC PLANNING HANDBOOK

## Table of Contents

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Foreword .....   | i  |
| A Definition of Strategic Planning .....               | 1  |
| Benefits and Pitfalls in Strategic Planning .....      | 2  |
| Strategic Planning Model .....                         | 3  |
| Strategic Planning Processes and Mechanisms .....      | 5  |
| Thoughts Regarding Short and Long Range Planning ..... | 7  |
| Chapters and Divisions with Strategic Plans .....      | 10 |
| Sources of Information .....                           | 11 |

## FOREWORD

The purpose of strategic or long-range planning is to assist the Association in establishing priorities and to better serve the needs of the membership. A strategic plan must be flexible and practical and yet serve as a guide to implementing programs, evaluating how these programs are doing, and making adjustments when necessary.

A strategic plan must reflect the thoughts, feelings, ideas, and wants of the developers and mold them along with the Association's purpose, mission, and regulations into an integrated document. The development of a plan requires much probing, discussion, and examination of the views of the leaders who are responsible for the plan's preparation. However, more often than not, the development of the plan is less complicated than is the implementation.

Implementation, in essence, pulls a plan apart and diffuses it throughout an organization. Every unit within the organization which is involved must then accept the plan, agree to its direction, and implement specific actions. In order to effectively and efficiently implement a plan, all individuals involved in its implementation must function as a whole or the plan is destined for failure.

This handbook has been put together in order to assist you in the implementation of your plan. It is an attempt to help you to get your plan started.

## A DEFINITION OF STRATEGIC PLANNING

Strategic planning is a tool for organizing the present on the basis of the projections of the desired future. That is, a strategic plan is a road map to lead an organization from where it is now to where it would like to be in five or ten years.

It is necessary to have a strategic plan for your chapter or division. In order to develop a comprehensive plan for your chapter or division which would include both long- range and strategic elements, we suggest the methods and mechanisms outlined in this manual.

The plan must be:

- simple
- written
- clear
- based on the real current situation
- have enough time allowed to give it a time to settle. It should not be rushed. Rushing the plan will cause problems.

## BENEFITS AND PITFALLS IN STRATEGIC PLANNING

Since the beginning of Special Libraries Association in 1909, it has experienced phenomenal growth in membership and influence. In the past ten years, growth has been particularly significant. Changes in the fields of special librarianship and information science have been dramatic and fundamental to the very way of doing business. The advent of on line systems and the computer age rapidly changed the way librarians/information managers operate.

The Association recognizes that it can no longer merely react to issues as they emerge. If it is to continue as a leader in improving the profession, it must begin to anticipate future change rather than merely react to change. The Association as well as each chapter and division needs to consider this long-term future. Drawing on the resources it has, both human and financial, it needs to continue to grow. These resources are limited, and careful thought must be given to the allocation of these resources. To meet obligations to the profession, the public, and the membership, it is essential that the Association and its units use these resources in the most efficient manner by determining priority areas on which to concentrate. This means the identification of goals, pursuing those goals, and achieving them. Strategic planning will help build continuity in the Association's programs, particularly in the areas of continuing education and publications. The Association has the gift of a great deal of diversity among the membership. The Association draws its strength from this diversity but at the same time, that diversity lessens the Association's impact in key areas because of a lack of cohesive focus by the organization. Therefore, it is necessary for each chapter and division to have a plan that is compatible with the overall strategic plan of SLA thus concentrating its efforts and greatly increasing its impact.

There are several pitfalls associated with strategic planning. First, the plan may not turn out as well as expected because of changes in the environment in which the plan is supposed to operate. Also, strategic planning is worthless in getting an organization out of a major crisis. A crisis is a current problem not solved by a strategic plan. And, if the planning process itself is weak, the resulting plan may be weak and not satisfactory to the organization. George Steiner in his *Strategic Planning* (see Sources of Information) lists 50 major common pitfalls in starting, doing, and using strategic planning.

## **STRATEGIC PLANNING MODEL**

In choosing the strategic planning model, two main things need to be considered. The first is whether you want the Association unit to plan as a not-for-profit, or as a profit organization. Association planning is not the same as the planning for universities or businesses or government agencies. Associations need to be consistently receptive to the needs of the membership-at-large. The main purpose is to serve the members more than to make a profit or to increase the size of the organization.

The strategic plan needs to include a Mission Statement, Objectives, Goals, and an Action (or Implementation) Plan.

### **Mission Statement**

This is the agreed-upon statement by the organization and explains the reason for its existence. It is necessarily broad to encompass the diversity within the Association. The statement is not precise in its measurements nor does it need to be, but it does need to be periodically reviewed by the Association to see whether it still encompasses all of the relevant activities of the Association.

### **Objectives**

The objectives are the areas of emphasis within the Association. Rather than specific statements with a specific goal, objectives state that the Association plans to continue to do quality work in the following areas. These objectives or areas of emphasis need to be attained by discussion and review of the organization's current activities as well as activities in which it would like to participate.

### **Goals**

These need to be both long-term and short-term goals; six months, one-year, three-years, and ten-year goals need to be set so that the strategy for reaching these goals can be outlined in the plan. Most organizations recommend setting the long-term goals first and then setting short-term goals: those goals which can be reached as steps to attaining the long-term goal.

## **Action Plan**

The Action Plan should be designed after the main goals and objectives have been set in order to attain the mission in a straightforward and measurable way. With an Action Plan, the goals themselves can be obtained. Without the Action Plan, and the measures it entails, it would be impossible to implement the plan and measure its success. Being able to measure success would certainly be important both for maintaining our tax status as a not-for-profit organization as well as to explain the use of it to the membership-at-large.

## STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESSES AND MECHANISMS

The publications "A Guide to Nominal Group and Delphi Processes" by Andre L. Blebecq, et al, and "Guide for Leaders Using Nominal Group Technique" by James G. Cope and Carl Moore, describe the combination of nominal group and Delphi processes. Using these techniques, an organization that is geographically separate can communicate and develop the working document in fairly rapid fashion.

### 1. Gathering of Background Information

Background information is used by your Strategic Planning Committee for its review. By shifting through that information, the Committee would be able to develop a sound basis to continue their work. After existing information has been gathered, another information gathering activity should take place. Develop a survey questionnaire to poll all members for their viewpoints on the directions your chapter or division should take. After the information has been synthesized from the questionnaires as well as from information already gathered, move to the second step.

### 2. A Planning Workshop

We recommend the suggestions put forth in an article by John N. Bailey in Leadership magazine, Spring 1981, pp. 26-29. The title of the article is "Strategic Planning: Lead Your Association With a Plan for Tomorrow". Based on this article, your chapter or division needs to gather information on five basic questions:

- (1) Where are we now?      (*The Situation*)
- (2) How did we get there?   (*Our Momentum*)
- (3) Where are we going?    (*The Direction*)
- (4) Where should we be going? (*Desired Direction*)
- (5) How will we get there?   (*The Strategic Plan*)

Bailey recommends that after gathering the background information, the planning workshop should take place.

The first session would assess the current situation and how you arrived at that present situation. The second activity of this first workshop is to try to figure out where you are going and where you want to be. This is a very hard-hitting and difficult time for any association or business given the economic conditions and the change within our profession itself.

(Divisions would be able to conduct this session during the Annual Conference.)

### 3. Designing a Planning Workbook

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The planning Workbook will bring together all of the information gathered during the Planning Workshop, sift through the ideas put forward, and organize them into a meaningful body for review by the Planning Workshop attendees and other interested parties in the organization.

#### **4. Second Planning Workshop**

After the Planning Workshop information has been gathered into a workbook, another workshop should be planned. At this workshop (which should not be held too long after the first one), several things need to be accomplished. In the first half-day a Mission Statement should be adopted for the Association. The Mission Statement will include what the Association intends to stand for; what it hopes to contribute to the world-at-large. It should set goals for the Association and then, having set the goals, fulfill the Mission Statement by translating each goal into a specific objective. This means that the Mission Statement will be carried forth into a strategic plan.

(Divisions could replace this session with a conference call or by correspondence.)

#### **5. The Committee Structure**

The Strategic Planning Committee should be composed of people who understand the organization of Special Libraries Association, but also who have a constant feel for the Association and your chapter and division in general, and where it is moving. The Strategic Planning Committee should be made a permanent standing committee within the chapters and divisions with a rotating membership. This will encourage constant review and updating by the membership.

## THOUGHTS REGARDING SHORT AND LONG RANGE PLANNING

In order to achieve a sound basis for the development of programs and activities, systematic planning efforts must be undertaken. The following is a stream of ideas about planning which have been able to find their way to paper. They are presented merely for a point of departure and not meant for any other purpose--a "Plan for Planning" so to speak.

I. **Planning** includes the ability to identify opportunities, analyze problems, establish priorities and needs, and allocate available resources. This also includes the establishment of priorities and needs, and allocate available resources. This also includes the establishment of policies and procedures, objectives and standards of performance, forecasts and budgets, programs and schedules.

A. Planning is necessary:

1. Provides direction
2. Gives perspective

B. Planning facilitates:

1. Involvement of concerned people and groups
2. Communication
3. Coordination

C. Steps in Planning:

1. Organizing
  - a. Establish a structure
  - b. Group involvement
2. Setting objectives
  - a. Nature of objectives
  - b. Basis for objectives
3. Establishing priorities--based on needs, opportunities, interrelationships between elements.
4. Designing activities

5. Dividing action into feasible steps
  - a. Short range
  - b. Long range
6. Implementing action
7. Disseminating information
8. Evaluating -- a continual process
9. Revising -- at least annually

## II. ***Program***

- A. Conceptual -- why the program should be undertaken.
  1. Problem statement
  2. Objectives
  3. Hypothesis
  4. Review of existing information
- B. Methodological -- what has to be done and how it will be done.
  1. Design Program
  2. Sampling
  3. Analysis
    - a. Quantitative
    - b. Qualitative
  4. Instrumentation selection or development

## III. ***Contents of Planning Document***

- A. Statement of philosophy
  1. General philosophy of the organization
  2. Philosophy of special libraries
- B. Needs assessment
- C. Goal of the Association
- D. Objectives of the Association
  1. Something we want
  2. Output - end product
  3. Means - end product
- E. Establish program alternatives

1. Fiscal -- costs of conducting the program:
  - a. Time
  - b. Resources
    - (1) Human
    - (2) Nonhuman
  - c. Money
2. Program -- set of activities which are combined into some structure and are carried out to achieve some previously stated objective.
3. Limits and constraints:
  - a. An analysis of what we have to work with and work against
  - b. Specify time, money, program requirements, people, and facilities within which the Association must operate
  - c. The statement of ground rules under which the Association must operate
4. Types of constraints:
  - a. Social
  - b. Technological
  - c. Administrative
  - d. Political
  - e. Legal
  - f. Economic
5. Forces affecting program development:
  - a. Political
  - b. Outside interest groups
  - c. Administrative hierarchy
  - d. Users
  - e. Professional organizations
6. Establish program priorities
7. Select best program alternative
8. Action plan
9. Evaluation of program

**SOURCES OF INFORMATION**  
(Compiled by Special Libraries Association)

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"Building Commitment Into Strategic Plan." Ken Whitney. *Association Management* September, 1994, 61-66.

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3. Futuring: Strategic Planning for Making Your Visions Come True. J. Scott Thornton. American Society of Association Executives, 1986.
4. Strategic Planning and the Nonprofit Board. Dabney G. Park, Jr. National Center for Nonprofit Boards, 1990.
5. Strategic Planning. by George Steiner. The Free Press, 1979.
6. **Vanguard** published by the American Society of Association Executives Foundation, available by subscription.